The Intellectual Climate of Cassius Dio

Historiography of Rome and Its Empire

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The Intellectual Climate of Cassius Dio

Greek and Roman Pasts

Edited by

Adam M. Kemezis
Colin Bailey
Beatrice Poletti

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For Peter Michael Swan
(*1931–2021*)

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Historiography of Rome and Its Empire Series

Carsten H. Lange and Jesper M. Madsen

The *Historiography of Rome and Its Empire* series aims to gather innovative and outstanding contributions that identify debates and trends, and in order to help provide a better understanding of ancient historiography, as well as how to approach Roman history and historiography. The series welcomes proposals that look at both Roman and Greek writers as well as manuscripts which focus on individual writers, or individuals in the same tradition. It is timely and valuable to bring these trends and historical sources together in the series, focusing mainly on the Republican period and the Principate, as well as the Later Roman Empire.

Historical writing about Rome in both Latin and Greek forms an integrated topic. There are two strands in ancient writing about the Romans and their empire: (a) the Romans' own tradition of histories of the deeds of the Roman people at home and at war, and (b) Greek historical responses, some developing their own models (Polybius, Josephus) and the others building on what both the Roman historians and earlier Greeks had written (Dionysius, Appian, Cassius Dio). Whereas older scholarship tended to privilege a small group of 'great historians' (the likes of Sallust, Livy, Tacitus), recent work has rightly brought out the diversity of the traditions and recognized that even 'minor' writers are worth exploring not just as sources, but for their own concerns and reinterpretation of their material, as well as their place within the tradition. The study of these historiographical traditions is essential as a counterbalance to the outmoded traditional use of ancient authors as a handy resource, with scholars looking at isolated sections of their structure. This fragmentary use of the ancient evidence makes us forget to reflect on their work in its textual and contextual entirety.

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As editors and conference organizers, we have a great many thanks to offer. This volume comes out of a conference titled "Greek and Roman Pasts in the Long Second Century: The Intellectual Climate of Cassius Dio" that was held in Banff, Alberta, at the Buffalo Mountain Lodge on 25–27 May 2018. It was made possible by the International Network for the Study of Cassius Dio and its chief organizers including Carsten Lange, Jesper Madsen, and Josiah Osgood. Through them we enjoyed the support of the Danmarks Frie Forskningsfond. Further funding came from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and, at the University of Alberta, from the Department of History and Classics, the Faculty of Arts Conference Fund, and the Kule Institute.

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In April 2021, during the last stages of editing this volume, we learned with sadness of the passing of Peter Michael Swan (1931–2021) of the University of Saskatchewan. Professor Swan was the leading organizer of a conference on Dio in Saskatoon in 1982 that led to the still active Dio Commentary project. His own portion of that project (*The Augustan Succession: An Historical Commentary on Cassius Dio's Roman History Books 55–56* [*9 BC–AD 14*], Oxford, 2004) and his articles on related topics remain indispensable to our understanding of Dio and are much cited in the pages that follow. It was not our good fortune to know or work with Professor Swan, but we dedicate this volume to him in gratitude for his contributions to Dio scholarship and the study of Classics in Western Canada.

Adam M. Kemezis (*University of Alberta*)
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August, 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Conversations with the Author

Adam M. Kemezis, Colin Bailey and Beatrice Poletti

In the Rome of the Severan and Antonine eras, as at any time or place, literature was a social and even communal practice. The works we have were written not just *by* authors, but for, to, with, among, about, and against those authors' friends, neighbors, superiors, dependents, predecessors, and competitors. Books were produced and processed in a physical and human infrastructure of libraries, bookstores, reading circles, and literary staff personnel ranging from the elite to the enslaved.[1] This is undoubtedly the world in which Cassius Dio lived, but one would hardly know it from his writings. He was a contemporary and, in some cases, likely an acquaintance of Philostratus, Galen, Aelian, and Athenaeus. But none of these men mentions him, nor he them. His contemporary books are full of self-portraiture: We see Dio as a senator, an administrator, and a privileged observer, but seldom in the role of author, and never as one author among others. Rather than picturing himself among the *literati* of Rome, the two locations he imagines for writing are a secluded Capuan villa (77[76].2.1 [Xiph.]) and his embittered, enforced retirement in Nicaea (80[80].5.3 [Xiph.]). The only person he ever names as reading his work is an emperor (Septimius Severus, 73[72].23.2 [Xiph.], along with anonymous contemporary readers); otherwise, he speaks mostly of generic readers who may be, like us, thousands of years and miles away.

Some of this is the effect of chance and genre. Dio has only one surviving work in a genre that traditionally aimed for magisterial detachment and left authors limited scope for self-conscious reflection on the literary scene. He has left us no other works written in less grand genres, as have Tacitus, Josephus, and Arrian, nor do we have a Severan Pliny to give us Dio's epistolary portrait. Still, given how much Dio does tell us about himself and his writings, the absence in those writings of a community or context for his literary activities must be a deliberate choice. His work presents itself as the product of long, intense, but largely solitary reflection and research. Modern scholarship has given Dio a correspondingly small place in its accounts of the cultural milieu of the time. The foundational accounts of the "Second Sophistic" from the 1990s

1 This context has been much illuminated by Johnson 2010 and subsequent scholarship in the same vein.

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barely mention him, and subsequent cultural-historical work, Greek-specific and otherwise, has largely followed suit.[2] Literary scholars have for the most part left Dio to historians or to specialists in the historiographical genre, who until recent decades have seldom given him their full attention.

Nonetheless, Dio's reluctance must be a pose, and we should avoid mistaking it for an accurate reflection of his writing practices. He cannot, given his career and his wide reading, have worked entirely in his Capuan retreat and then in Nicaea. And the content of his work shows that, for all the distance he tries to create around himself, he is as engaged as any other author in conversation with his peers and earlier writers. It is that engagement and conversation that the papers in this collection examine, recognizing Dio's solitude as a literary construct and aiming where possible to relieve it. Dio may not mention the authors around him, but this cannot and should not prevent readers, then and now, from placing him in relation to them in terms of his content, style, and cultural self-positioning. His description of his own project – "to set down everything concerning the Romans" (73[72].23.2 [Xiph.]) is disarmingly bland, but the shape he gives the work aligns him with or away from Tacitus, Appian, and their predecessors in both languages, as well as the chroniclers of Severus' wars. And while Dio's contemporary persona is that of an astute but straightforward and even ingenuous reporter passing on the first draft of history, in reality he is, as several of our contributors demonstrate, writing a response to narratives put forth by the actors themselves and making his own careful intervention in the ever-sharper contests for possession of the Roman past. These contests were not confined to the control of recent memory: Figures such as Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Nero were still valuable symbolic territory, used and discussed in contexts by no means limited to historiography or to literature in general. When in Dio's accounts of the Late Republic we detect a Severan discursive flavor (as many contributors to this volume do), it is not simply a question of anachronism interfering with Dio's correct understanding of the foreign country that is the past. Rather, we are seeing one small stage in the massive dynamic process by which successive generations of rulers, authors, and the elite as a whole put their cultural heritage to use to frame contemporary realities. In short, Dio's history is not only a description of his time but also a document of it, to be read in relation to whatever we can reconstruct of the discursive world into which it emerged.

Existing scholarship on Dio points us along many routes into this world. Perhaps the best traveled is that which begins with Fergus Millar's still indispensable 1964 *Study of Cassius Dio*. Millar worked in a tradition, seen above all

2 The indices of Schmitz 1997 and Whitmarsh 2001 contain only scattered anecdotal citations. Anderson 1993, 106 allots Cassius Dio half a page. Swain 1996, who uses an author-based structure, gives Cassius Dio the shortest of his chapters at seven pages.

in Syme's *Tacitus*, of reading ancient historiography through the lens of prosopography. His achievement was to combine the views that Dio states explicitly in the *Roman History* with the data we have on his career to create a compelling persona for the Severan senator. Millar's Dio is a social role expressed in narrative prose: blinkered and intellectually pedestrian, to be sure, but observant and, within his limits, shrewd in his judgements. Work in the prosopographical tradition continues, notably with the contribution of Michel Molin in the 2016 *Cassius Dion: Nouvelles lectures* volume. A similar line of interpretation, going back to Zvi Rubin's 1980 *Civil-War Propaganda and Historiography*, is to read Dio as a controversialist whose works (in various stages of development) recapitulated and reacted to the partisan polemic of the late Antonine and Severan eras.[3] Recent Anglophone work has also been willing to see Dio as less an observer than a re-creator of his times, artfully constructing both the landscape and his own miniature portrait within it.[4]

In Millar's view, Dio "took as his own the political and national traditions of the Roman state, while retaining unimpaired the cultural outlook of the Greek world in which he was born."[5] Millar, however, was a political and social rather than cultural historian, and thus inevitably came to emphasize the "Roman" side of the above dichotomy. Others have wanted to redress the balance by placing Dio in a more markedly Greek context, often that of the so-called Second Sophistic, although, as mentioned above, this work has often been isolated from the increasing Anglophone scholarship on that cultural phenomenon. A pair of articles from the mid-1980s by Gerhard Aalders and Walter Ameling were for years the main resource in this area and were based chiefly on biographical inference and Dio's few explicit statements on Greek questions.[6] Recent work has been more willing to nuance its cultural categories and to engage with all aspects of the imperial Greek contexts. In this respect, one can point to Lange & Madsen's 2016 *Cassius Dio: Greek Intellectual and Roman Politician* volume that inaugurated the series of which this book is a continuation. In particular, several contributors to that volume took on Dio's

3 See also Schmidt 1997; Slavich 2001; Molinier Arbò 2009; Christol 2016; Madsen 2016; Rantala 2016.

4 E.g., Gleason 2011; Kemezis 2012; Osgood 2016; Scott 2017; Scott 2021.

5 Millar 1964, 191, going on to characterize Dio as a precursor of the Byzantine identity that Millar himself would delineate decades later in his 2006 *A Greek Roman Empire.*

6 Ameling 1984; Aalders 1986. Ameling 1997, in spite of its publication date, appears from its bibliography to have been written around 1990, and its view of the Second Sophistic is correspondingly dated. For Dio in the context of Roman-era Greek political thought, see also Blois 1998. Burden-Strevens 2015 represents an important advance in positioning Dio culturally relative to his Bithynian roots.

relationship to the educational and rhetorical culture of his day, both Greek and Latin.[7]

Outside of the single-author scholarship on Dio, there are several larger cultural narratives in which scholars have found a place for Dio. One is that of provincial reaction and adaptation to Roman domination, a question that Martin Hose and Jesper Madsen have approached from different scholarly angles, but both positioning Dio the Bithynian senator as the last stage of a process that had begun a century or more before.[8] Géza Alföldy's famous 1974 article on "The Crisis of the Third Century as Seen by Contemporaries", by contrast, places Dio at the beginning, as the last outpost of the High Empire at the edge of a wilderness on whose far side lies the world of the Tetrarchy and Constantine.[9] Adam Kemezis' 2014 *Greek Narratives of the Roman Past under the Severans* similarly places Dio in the context of dynastic change as reflected in contemporary narrative literature. Lastly, there is literary history and specifically Dio's place in his genre. There is an evident continuity between Dio and a line of Greek authors on Rome going from Polybius, through Dionysius, Plutarch, and Appian to Herodian, Dexippus, and even Ammianus. Alain Gowing's 1992 *The Triumviral Narratives of Appian and Cassius Dio* provides a revealing side-by-side view of those two authors. Recent survey articles by David Potter and Sulochana Asirvatham provide important context (respectively more diachronic and synchronic) for Dio within the historical genre, and the 2016 *Nouvelles lectures* volume includes important essays in the "sources and models" line of interpretation connecting Dio with Dionysius and Polybius, but a full treatment of the Greek historical tradition on Rome and Dio's place in it remains a *desideratum*.[10] Similarly, Dio's relationship to his Latin predecessors has largely been the object of source-research and discrete (though often highly illuminating) comparisons with parallel portions of Tacitus.[11]

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7 See in particular the articles of Fomin, Jones, and Schulz. The contributions of Carlsen and Gowing also shed light on the "Greek vs. Roman" question.

8 Hose 1994 and Madsen 2009.

9 Alföldy 1974; see also Blois 1994; Molin 2006.

10 Potter 2011 and Asirvatham 2017. For various other approaches in this tradition, see Gabba 1959; Zimmermann 1999; Kuhn-Chen 2002; Pelling 2007; Sidebottom 2007 and Scanlon 2015 (see 265–267 for Dio), as well as case studies in Pelling 2006; Gowing 2009; Potter 2016.

11 For Dio and Tacitus, see recently Gillespie 2015; Devillers 2016; Markov 2016 and Schulz 2019. More general treatments include Flach 1973; Freyburger-Galland 1992 and the introduction to Rich 1990. The other Latin author alongside whom Dio has frequently been read is Cicero, for whom see (in addition to Porod in this volume) recently Montecalvo 2014 and Peer 2020.

The last five years have seen (and continue to see) tremendous output on Dio that adds greatly to our understanding of the above conversations.[12] Our aim in organizing the conference in Banff, Canada, which forms the basis for this volume was to further these various efforts to give Dio a fuller grounding in his own time and in ongoing narratives that stretched through that time.[13] Many of our contributors see him above all in political contexts of the court and the Senate, sometimes directly commenting on contemporary politics (Langford, Lindholmer, Pownall, and Bertolazzi) but just as often using his long vision into the past and his deep engagement with Latin source material to give perspective on existing political discussions (Potter, Perry, Madsen, and Tate). In both cases, however, we hope that just as Dio's political background served Millar as a clue to interpreting his text, so his commentaries on past and present may illuminate the kinds of conversations that made up the discursive background in which his text is set. Other contributors look at the dynamics of Greek and Roman in Dio's wider cultural environment, whether it be the Roman *ludi* (Rossiter & Brothers), the cities of Dio's ancestral region (Kuhn), or the political implications of language choice (Asirvatham). None of these pieces reads Dio as entirely typical of his environment; rather, he emerges as a singular and even eccentric figure, one who shows us the complex variations that could be generated from the simplistic "Greek culture/Roman power" dichotomy with which both ancient sources and modern scholars describe the Roman Empire of this time. Others of our contributors establish more literary connections, typically into Dio's near or distant past rather than his contemporary moment. Several articles deal with his relationship to second-century political theory (Markov) or fiction (Jones and Allen), while others look further back to authors of the late Republican period (Porod and Kemezis) or to Hellenistic and earlier Roman writings on divination and celestial signs (Stewart) or forward to the *Historia Augusta* (Pistellato). Dio, so opinionated on all matters of history, is oddly reluctant to make explicit comments about his fellow authors, but much can be inferred from the anecdotes he tells about

12 One can point in particular to the several edited volumes that have come out since Lange & Madsen 2016 and Fromentin *et al.* 2016. These include Burden-Strevens & Lindholmer 2019; Osgood & Baron 2019; Lange & Scott 2020; Burden-Strevens, Madsen & Pistellato 2020 and Madsen & Lange 2021, along with Davenport & Mallan 2021. Individual relevant contributions are too many to be cited in this introduction, but every effort has been made to engage with them in the individual articles of the volume.

13 The conference upon which this volume is based took place May 25–May 27, 2018, with financial support from the Danmarks Frie Forskningsfond, the Cassius Dio Network, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada as well as the University of Alberta.

their political activities and his tacit forays into their intellectual and rhetorical territory.

1 Greek and Roman Pasts: Dio's Intellectual Context(s)

Dio's claim to have written the *Roman History* in response to encouragement from Septimius Severus following the presentation of his analysis of dreams may support Millar's observation that Dio wrote his history in part for the sake of securing his own fame,[14] but it is far from clear that his discussion of Roman history therefore lacks a cohesive interpretative structure. In the last decade or so, scholars – many of whom have contributed to this volume and others in the series of which it is a part[15] – have dedicated significant energy to examining not simply Dio's account of the past but also the ways that his participation in the present influenced his interpretation and representation of that past. This work has drawn attention to Dio's engagement with the topics and questions which occupied both the better-studied intellectuals of the so-called Second Sophistic and the scholars working on second- and third-century imperial literature: Just as Dio was neither exclusively Greek nor Roman, so was he neither simply a historian nor simply a senator. He was, instead, both Greek and Roman, historian and senator, drawing on his Greek cultural background, his Roman political activity, his knowledge of the past, and his experience of the present to offer a nuanced and cohesive vision of Roman politics and society in the early third century. He offers unique contributions to contemporary debates about the nature of political power, its proper uses, and its legitimacy, rather than simply reiterating and repeating the opinions of his sources or those of his more widely recognized literary predecessors, such as Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, or Aelius Aristides.[16]

1.1 *Political Theory and Commentary*

The articles in the first section of this volume explore aspects of Dio's political views. By engaging with political theory, both directly through his analysis of events and indirectly through set-speeches (especially that of Maecenas in

14 Millar 1964, 73.

15 See also Fromentin, *et al.* 2016, and the separate publications of the mostly Francophone contributors.

16 *Contra* Swain 1996, 403, who notes that Dio believed that monarchy was the key to political stability, but that he expressed views which were "similar to those of Plutarch and the rest".

book 52),[17] Dio presents his *Roman History* as, among other things, an analysis of how and why autocracy necessarily and fittingly emerged from the ruins of the Republic, while carefully avoiding a teleologically oriented encomium of Rome or the imperial system[18]: His political theory admits of both praise and blame of the emperors, providing a cohesive interpretation of Roman history and the political realities of Severan Rome based on his experiences as a Roman senator and as a Graeco-Roman intellectual.[19] In exploring the origins of the principate, Dio illustrates how the aristocracy failed to check its own faults, explains how the autocratic system, too, has gone wrong and suggests how the monarchy might be brought back to the ideal for the good of Rome.

Dio's interpretation of the collapse of the Republic and the emergence of the principate was naturally influenced by his own experiences as a senator and consul in Severan Rome. This is particularly apparent in his treatment of Pompey the Great. In the first contribution to this collection, David Potter suggests that Dio offers a multifaceted portrait of Pompey[20] which invites us to reflect more fully on Pompey's role in Roman politics. Writing more than two centuries after Pompey's death, Dio was sufficiently separated from the period of collapse that he could treat Pompey as more than an enemy of Caesar. Potter thus suggests that Dio used Pompey and his extraordinary offices of the 60s and 50s to explore the institutional failures during the period of *dynasteia* which preceded the principate and which Dio saw as a distinct system from *monarchia*. Dio presents Pompey as a great man brought tragically low, distinguishing him from earlier figures such as Marius and Sulla, who were, in Dio's view, wrongly praised by Severus and Caracalla. He offers Pompey, alongside Caesar, as a precursor of Augustus and later emperors and, as such, a better role-model for contemporary emperors. Pompey serves as an object lesson of sorts whose successes and failures merit careful study in light of the tense relationship between senators and emperors in Severan Rome.

17 This is, of course, far from the only use to which Dio puts direct speech. See recently Burden-Strevens 2020. Rich 2019 analyzes the speeches in the fragmentary early books of Dio's *Roman History* and notes the connection between the general absence of extended direct speech in the books following the reign of Augustus and Dio's conception of imperial history (224).

18 See Hose 2008, 960.

19 Hose 2008.

20 Porod in this volume suggests that Dio similarly offers a complex characterization of Cicero, rehabilitating the Republican from the hostile interpretations that Dio found in his sources. See also Langford in this volume, who focuses on Dio's characterization of Julia Domna, which is equally complex, revealing more problematic elements as her role in the narrative evolves. All three contributors suggest that Dio's characterizations of Pompey, Cicero, and Domna, respectively, were influenced by his rhetorical purposes.

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a senator closely associated with the imperial family and a two-time consul, Dio was keenly interested in the relationship between the Senate and the emperor.[21] So, Perry argues, Dio's and his fellow senators' collective fears of Septimius Severus shaped the historian's perception of the relationship between Augustus and his senators.[22] In Dio's view, both Augustus and Septimius Severus, coming to power after civil wars and in need of a return to stability, had to find a way to allay senatorial fears of the violence which they had employed to secure their imperial authority, even as they had to protect themselves against potential senatorial violence. Perry reads the Augustan revisions of senatorial membership and the *Lex Julia de senatu habendo* (Cass. Dio. 55.3.1–4) as attempts by the first emperor to balance his response to passive senatorial resistance and his need for personal safety.[23] Dio presents the senatorial reforms as a series of efforts intended to define the relationship between Emperor and Senate, but in couching that relationship in terms of the senators' fears of Augustus and Augustus' fears of the senators, Dio imposes his own fears of the emperors of the Severan dynasty onto the senators of the past. He emphasizes Severus' emulation of Octavian's cruelty and thereby offers a critique of Severus' management of his relationship with the senators, even as he acknowledges the necessity of imperial autocracy.[24]

Despite his readiness to critique the emperors of his own day, though, Dio remained a committed supporter of the institution of monarchy, as Madsen and Markov argue separately in Chapters 3 and 4. His support, though, is not based on idealistic support for the emperors, nor is it a simplistic recapitulation of the political theories of monarchy produced by earlier Greek and Roman theorists. Instead, Dio implicates himself into the discussions of the nature of political power and authority well-known from the works of his (near) contemporaries, as well as writers of the distant past. He offers not simply a justification of imperial power, but an illustration of the best form of imperial power which is distinct from his predecessors' views. For, as Madsen shows, Dio's ideal constitution is not a mixed constitution in the style of Polybius (6.11.1–18.8) or Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2.14.2–4)[25]; nor does he recreate a bitter Tacitean

21 Peer 2020, 225.

22 On the impact of senatorial fears of the emperor, and particularly Dio's fears of the Severan emperors, see also Jones and Allen in this volume.

23 See Pettinger 2019, 55–60 for the view that the form of the revisions was pushed on Augustus by a group of senatorial reformers.

24 For Dio's belief that an autocratic system was necessary, cf. Madsen 2020, 29–50, as well as Madsen and Markov in this volume.

25 On the development of the mixed constitution in political thinking in the Republican period, cf. Arena 2013, 82–102.

critique of autocracy and the suppression of the *libertas* of the traditional elite; nor again does he offer an encomium of the best sort of emperor, in the style of Pliny's *Panegyricus*. Instead, Madsen argues, Dio offers a model in which the emperor, even a bad emperor, *must* be absolute in his power, for the senatorial aristocracy had, in Dio's view, proven itself unable to govern peacefully.[26] Only if his power is absolute and not limited by the aristocracy can an emperor ensure the stability and well-being of the state, for he can then suppress the excessive competition for personal glory which had brought about the ruin of the republic. A supreme emperor, though, does not, in Dio's view, require or imply a servile senate, for "good" emperors would recognize the Senate as a body of advisors from which to choose a successor. There thus remained, Madsen argues, a role for the senators, but it was one which was subordinate to the emperor. As loyal supporters of the emperor, leading senators could hope to be chosen as the reigning emperor's successor and contribute to the continuation of the ideal constitution.

Markov similarly sees the relationship between the emperor and the Senate as central to Dio's conception of the ideal constitution,[27] providing a comparative analysis of the usage of δημοκρατία in Dio's account of the debate between Agrippa and Maecenas (Cass. Dio 52), Aelius Aristides' encomium of Rome (Aristid. *Or*. 26), and Flavius Philostratus' account of Apollonius' discussion of the ideal form of constitution (esp. Philostr. *VA* 5.32–36). Dio's characterization of imperial power as δημοκρατία, far from being a euphemism or a reflection of an eroded understanding of democracy, reveals Dio's belief that the emperor, ideally, should provide freedom and equality to those who are able to act in the best interests of the state, ensuring its stability – that is, the Roman senators. Dio's conception of δημοκρατία (and the role of the Senate) is thus distinct from the conceptions of Aristides and Philostratus, who stress the roles of the provincial elite and the imperial family, respectively. Markov gives the Senate somewhat more independence than Madsen, but the role of the Senate remains the same, namely, to use the freedom provided by the emperor to advise and support the emperor. Dio's conception of δημοκρατία draws on Greek and Latin political thinkers, Roman jurisprudential texts, and his own experiences in the Senate, but is informed ultimately by his conception of human nature. He thereby offers a unique contribution to the ongoing literary

26 For the Senate's actions as impacting the instability of the late Republic, see further Markov 2020. Dio illustrates the aristocratic failure in a variety of means, not least, the exploration of different "versions" of men such as Pompey and Cicero (see Potter and Porod, respectively, in this volume), but also divine signs (see Stewart in this volume).

27 On Dio's view of the importance of the relationship between the emperor and the senate, see also Langford in this volume.

discussion about the nature of political power and authority in the long second century.

Although Dio was ready to criticize the incompetent and self-interested emperors of his own day, he was reluctant to criticize the institutional legitimacy of the emperor's position. Pistellato, in the final chapter of this section, places Dio side-by-side with the *Historia Augusta* and examines the role of the *nomen Antoninorum* in the two sources. He argues that Severus used the name "Antoninus" to try to enhance his legitimacy, but that Dio downplayed the attempt because by the time he was writing it had become clear that the effort was a failure; the *Historia Augusta*, on the other hand, preserves a more accurate record of Severus' efforts and those of his successors. At first, Severus sought to use the *nomen Antoninorum* as previous emperors had used the *nomen Augustum*, namely, to confirm his status and that of his son as *principes*. But, when later emperors in the dynasty, particularly Elagabalus, abandoned the high standard of imperial rule and conduct which had characterized the Antonine dynasty and showed themselves to be unworthy of the name, their (mis)use of the *nomen Antoninorum* called into question its legitimating power, such that Severus Alexander declined to use it. By downplaying the use of the name, Dio circumspectly avoids a genuine political and juridical issue which affected both the emperor and the senators. The *Historia Augusta*, on the other hand, reflects the efforts of the Severan emperors to legitimize themselves with the *nomen Antoninorum* and is able to do so because of its focus on individual emperors rather than on the dynasty as a whole. By downplaying the Severan use of the *nomen Antoninorum*, Dio shows himself to have been keenly aware of issues of dynastic legitimacy and to have engaged in an active process of shaping his reader's perception of recent history in keeping with his belief in the necessity of the imperial system, even at the expense of strict historical accuracy.

1.2 *Rome and the Imperial Court*

Cassius Dio and other members of the political elite had seen the positive aspects of adoptive succession and, more recently, the potential for decline – and even disaster – in a system of dynastic succession. He himself had benefitted from imperial patronage under Septimius Severus and, later, Julia Maesa, so that he had to tread carefully, particularly in his accounts of contemporary events. But, as a senatorial historian, he inevitably filtered events through the lens of an official close to the center of power and a member of a body with whose ideals and views he strongly identified.[28] Thus, like many members

28 See Scott 2017.

of the elite – Roman and provincial – and intellectuals of the Antonine and Severan periods, Dio exhibits constant concerns about the place of the Senate in an autocratic imperial court. In doing so, he echoes and continues the contemporary conversation about the diminishing role of the Senate in Rome's political life, its precarious relationships with the emperor and the imperial court, and – for the contemporary portions of his history – the emperors' failures to re-establish peace, stability, and a sound method for succession. Even as he suggests what the Senate's role *should* be, as Madsen and Markov suggest, he is critical of the actual place of the Senate (himself included) within imperial governance at such a low point of Roman history; he highlights its frailty, its fears, and its inability to curb the emperors' whims, as well as the debasing sycophancy which it was obliged to adopt under despotic autocrats.[29] As the articles in the first section of this collection suggest, however, Dio supported the autocracy, and so imperial succession was an important topic in his analysis of the present. The articles in this second section highlight two main aspects of Dio's concern: the political involvement of members of the Severan household as well as senatorial responses to their shortcomings, and the dangers caused by emperors who favored the advice and initiatives of their relatives and protégés, often of lower social standing,[30] over the senators themselves. Together, our contributors suggest that Dio used the interactions between the emperor, his household members (particularly female members), and the Senate to comment on the leadership and aptitude of individual emperors while subtly critiquing the policies of contemporary emperors and the crisis of imperial rule, thereby illustrating how far contemporary politics fell short of Dio's, and perhaps the Senate's, political ideal.

First-hand experience of court intrigues under the Severan dynasty, with its powerful women occupying public roles, accumulating honors, and scheming for influence within the imperial succession, conceivably intensified the Senate's disillusionment with the leadership of the Severan emperors, including Septimius Severus, whose reign had initially offered hopes of renewed stability. In their chapters, Tate, Langford, and, to a lesser extent, Lindholmer and Bertolazzi explore Dio's approach to the public involvement of imperial women and its significance in the definition of an emperor's image and personality. Although thematically different, their contributions reconsider common interpretations of Dio's narrative as merely reflecting traditional misogynistic views on women's participation in public life. They argue, instead, that critiques of imperial women acting in public served as commentaries on their

29 Scott 2017; Gleason 2011.

30 See Molin 2016.

respective emperor and his relationship with the Senate: Expressing anxieties common to the male political elite, Dio suggests that ambitious imperial wives and mothers threaten the Senate's pre-eminence as an advisory body and co-ruler. Pownall deals more specifically with the Severan dynasty's pretensions of legitimacy and contemporary perceptions of the later Severan emperors, while Bertolazzi and Stewart investigate how Dio's narrative of portents is used to emphasize the atmosphere of instability prevalent in Dio's time and his later years of service.

Tate examines Dio's account of the dedication of two Augustan buildings, the *Porticus Liviae* on the Oppian Hill and the *Porticus Octaviae* in the Circus Flaminius. While most sources ascribe their construction to Augustus' wife and sister, respectively, Dio fails to reference the participation of Livia and Octavia and instead credits Augustus himself. Tate suggests that this attribution is deliberate and is meant to reinforce Dio's presentation of Augustus as "an ideal *princeps*" (below, 187), who rebuilt the city's physical structures and morals in keeping with expectations of traditional (masculine) Roman leadership. Since building programs were crucial for the emperor's self-presentation as a benevolent ruler and public benefactor, imperial women's interference in this sphere could suggest passive and untraditional behavior on the emperor's part. The question of the identity of these buildings' patrons, then, is part of a larger conversation on the nature of imperial power and invites parallels with Dio's own time. Indeed, contemporary perceptions of past imperial women, such as Livia, may have been colored by the public behavior of women of the Severan dynasty.[31] As Tate observes, the case of Julia Domna is telling. Her building activity appears to be limited under her husband Septimius Severus, who posited himself as a second Augustus,[32] but her public involvement increases under her son Caracalla, signaling the debasement of imperial leadership.

Langford further explores Dio's portrayal of Julia Domna as a duplicitous figure who transforms from a virtuous wife and mother to an ambitious and ruthless woman after her husband's and son's deaths. Unlike Augustus' wife Livia, however, Julia Domna does not enhance her husband's image with her ostensible propriety. Dio describes the conflicts between Domna and the praetorian prefect Plautianus, both of whom, he suggests, sought power for themselves; he shows that Severus was unable to restrain either Plautianus' ambition and abuses of power or his wife's attempts to curb the prefect, hinting at Severus' "poor leadership and effeminacy" (below, 214). Langford notes that each appearance of Julia Domna in the surviving narrative, from Plautianus'

31 See, briefly, Barrett 2002, 155.

32 Scott 2017 and Tate in this volume.

machinations and demise to Caracalla's assassination of Geta, is set within a broader commentary on the emperor's relationship with the Senate, which illustrates that body's diminished importance. Dio also characterizes Domna by the negative qualities that she transmitted to her son, including her "Syrian cunning" (Cass. Dio 78[77].6.1a = *Exc. Val.* 361), which invites comparison to earlier eastern queens and foreshadows Domna's royal ambitions. She finally discloses her true nature and royal ambitions after Caracalla's death. Dio, Langford argues, meant this climactic portrayal to serve as advice to future emperors to distrust their wives and mothers and rely on the Senate as their only trustworthy advisory body.

Due to Dio's immersion in the imperial court, daily events and ceremonies which had passed unremarked in earlier historians take on new and critical significance in our historian's discussion. Thus, Lindholmer analyzes the imperial admission (*salutatio*) and suggests that, unlike his literary predecessors, Dio viewed this ritual as politically charged: It is for him symbolically representative of the emperor's relationship with those who were admitted, namely the members of the Senate. Earlier imperial writers, from Seneca to Martial and Tacitus, critique *salutationes* as ceremonies that reinforced power relations in terms of patronage and subservience in Roman society more broadly. Dio, on the other hand, reframes the *salutatio* as a revealing illustration of an emperor's interaction with the senators by focusing only on *salutationes* involving the emperor or members of his household. Dio thus treats the *salutatio* as an opportunity to comment on both the emperor's behavior towards the Senate and senatorial expectations of the emperor's behavior. Furthermore, as Tate suggests in the case of public building, the *salutatio*, too, emerges in Dio's narrative as a practice embodying the emperor's authority; but, when it is undertaken by other members of the imperial household, such as the emperor's wife, his mother or his praetorian prefects, the *salutatio* signifies dysfunctional rulership as well as the debasement of the senators, who ought to have been the emperor's co-rulers and advisors as well as co-greeters in imperial admissions.

Contemporary perceptions of the emperor's aptitude and legitimacy are also the focus of Pownall's contribution. In a highly influential article ten years ago, Gleason discussed Dio's description of imperial charade as instrumental in revealing his assessment of contemporary emperors and, in general, their perception by members of the Senate and the ruling class.[33] Dio presents posing as a god, a hero, or a mythological character as a transgressive and dangerous behavior for an emperor no less, one may suggest, than delegating power to his wife or mother. By analyzing Dio's treatment of two instances of imperial

33 Gleason 2011.

imitations of Alexander the Great, Pownall argues that Dio read Alexander as an unsuitable paradigm for Roman imperial leadership and thereby questions the capabilities of Caracalla and the later Severans as rulers. The first episode recounts Caracalla's crossing of the Hellespont in 214 CE and his sacrifices to Achilles at Ilium, which were meant to evoke Alexander's campaign to the East as well as the Trojan War, which Alexander himself had evoked. Dio, however, emphasizes farcical elements of Caracalla's re-enactment of the Macedonian king's feats and thus the illusory nature of Caracalla's claims to military prowess. The second episode focuses on the appearance, in 221 CE, of the Alexander-*daimon* repeating Caracalla's journey of seven years before, an episode which Dio relates to the ascension of Bassianus, conveniently renamed "Alexander" upon his adoption by Elagabalus. Building on Millar,[34] Pownall argues that by staging the pseudo-Alexander's imitation of Caracalla's journey, Alexander Severus' supporters sought to reinforce his legitimacy as emperor through the connection to Caracalla. However, by presenting this second *imitatio Alexandri* as a parody, since it reproduced Caracalla's earlier *imitatio Alexandri*, Dio "raises the question of the imperial legitimacy of the dynasty as a whole, as well as the young emperor's place within it" (below, 269).

The contributions of Tate, Langford, and Lindholmer collectively show how Dio exploited his portraits of imperial women to comment on the emperor's qualities and his relationships with the Senate. However, Dio's description of Julia Maesa and her involvement in Elagabalus' and Alexander Severus' ascensions appears as a deviation from this trend, revealing different aims on Dio's part. In his contribution, Bertolazzi investigates Dio's silence on Maesa's role as emperor-maker as she plotted, successively, for Elagabalus' ascension, his demise, and his adoption of Severus Alexander. He posits that Dio may have been motivated by opportunism, as his career flourished at that time and in circumstances that suggest Maesa's own support for our historian. Additionally, by endorsing the official version of divine agency behind the two emperors' ascensions, ostensibly foretold by prophecies of the god Elagabal and several prodigies, Dio sought to underline the chaotic situation and climate of insecurity in the government of the empire. Bertolazzi further draws attention to the personal vicissitudes of Dio, which are reflected in his narrative choices, as he omits overt references to the Syrian princesses' roles in contemporary power brokering. While Dio was aware of both the unlikeliness of divine interventions in the making of the emperors Elagabalus and Alexander Severus and the true behind-the-scenes activities of Maesa and her daughter Soaemias, he

34 Millar 1964, 214–218.

may have been unwilling to suggest that his own career in the 220s had been "a by-product" of their political maneuverings (below, 269).

As in the instances examined by Bertolazzi, the narrative use of omens and prodigies as metaphors to represent the state of chaos and imminent change for the empire is further explored in Stewart's contribution. The belief in the authenticity of divine signs and heavenly phenomena as foreshadowing future events is pervasive in Dio's work, ostensibly motivated by his desire to explain the signs foretelling Severus' rise to power and his own call to history through dreams.[35] Stewart argues that for Dio, prodigies did not concern or endorse individual actions but, in line with traditional Roman religiosity, portended events affecting the empire as a whole. Stewart considers instances of prodigies from Romulus' reign, the power struggles at the end of the Republic, the rise of Octavian, and the successive rule of Julio-Claudian, Flavian, Antonine, and Severan emperors. The signs intensify as Dio approaches his own age and appear to portend the spiraling crisis into which Dio saw the empire plunging. While Dio does record portents concerning the destiny of individuals (notably, the rise or fall of specific emperors), he does not intend them as signs of divine (dis)favor towards them personally, but rather as signs warning of the broader risks to the state deriving from individual misbehavior.

1.3 *Literary Heritage*

Dio explores political stability and legitimate rule through his analysis and representation of relationships which reflected the anxieties of the elite in contemporary Rome (e.g., emperor-Senate, emperor-wife, subject-ruler, among others) as the articles in the previous section suggest; the articles in the third section of this collection suggest that in contemporary literature, Dio found an additional field in which he might engage the reader in conversations about control of the past and his experience of the Severan age. As noted above, Dio read widely, and not just in history: He shows a familiarity with themes and narrative structures in the Greek novel; his praise of autocratic monarchy shows a familiarity with the nuances of Roman jurisprudence; he shows a familiarity with and approval of rhetoric; despite his reluctance to name senatorial historians as sources, he nonetheless demonstrates his familiarity with their works in subtle and, at times, subversive ways.[36] In shaping his

35 Cass. Dio 73[72].23.1–5. See, e.g., Scott 2017; Gleason 2011; Marincola 1997, 43–51.

36 On the novel, cf. Bowersock 1994, 52–53, as well as Jones and Allen in this volume. Dio's engagement with Roman jurisprudence: Markov in this volume. Rhetoric: Rich 2019, 221 notes the influence of Dio's rhetorical education in his speeches, while Fomin 2016 surveys the rhetorical elements of Dio's speeches; see also Porod in this volume. Dio's treatment of senatorial historians: Kemezis in this volume.

account of the Roman past, Dio expected a similar breadth of reading from his audience and challenges his readers' expectations of historiography both by deploying tools shared with other prose genres (particularly the novel) and by avoiding traditional methods of establishing his historiographical authority. As Dio's speeches draw on elite education in rhetoric to engage the reader in a deeper discourse with his text,[37] so too do themes and motifs from popular novels, once recognized by the reader, invite closer reflection. Dio and the novelists were not unaware of one another (chronology permitting), and Dio used themes and motifs which he knew his reader would recognize from the novel[38] and which he could therefore deploy to depict the experienced reality of a Roman senator under the later Severan emperors; at the same time, he questions the ability of an author to provide a truthful account of the past in a present where imperial authorities sought to exert their own control over the past. He invites the reader to consider the process of historiography and the purpose of studying history. Dio curates his account of the distant and recent past by incorporating into his history aspects of other genres in order to illustrate aspects of the political, social, and cultural uncertainties of his own time. The result is a destabilization both of individual emperors and of the historiographical enterprise, so that Dio's *Roman History* becomes an artifact of Severan Rome as well as a record of Roman history, embodying the uncertainties of his time.

Dio introduces into his *Roman History* themes and motifs which modern scholars typically associate with the ancient novel. These literary devices are not, however, exclusive to the novel, but rather, as Jones and Allen suggest, devices used by both the novelists and Dio. Dio's skill in deploying these devices in his narrative allows him, as Jones argues, to raise implicit questions about the reality of the senatorial experience under a series of increasingly incompetent emperors. The fantastical elements of the Greek novel are echoed increasingly in Dio's contemporary books and allow him to destabilize the historical narrative, creating a reflection of the uncertainties and absurdities which he and his fellow citizens experienced in Severan Rome. This is not to say that Dio emulated the novelists or sought to import one genre into another; nor that he diminishes the historical veracity of his account with these fantastical elements. Rather, Dio was creatively involved in the same literary and intellectual milieu in which the novelists were working: He uses features which we often associate with the novel as historiographical tools to illustrate a truth beyond

37 Fomin 2016, 237.

38 This is not to limit or define the direction of influence between historiography and novel writing.

the facts themselves, revealing the uncertain safety of himself and his fellow senators.

Allen, in the following contribution, points to additional novelistic parallels in his analysis of Dio's account of the reign of Macrinus. Dio carefully separates the more novelistic scenes from his main narrative of Macrinus' reign, using the fantastical to direct the reader's interpretation of the historical, and allowing ambiguous or even contradictory interpretations of the main historical narrative. Dio thereby suggests that his experience of contemporary Rome, of the empire, and of the emperors approaches the fantastical (un)reality of the novels. Moreover, just as the novel may have offered an escape for the reader, Allen suggests that Dio's use of themes and motifs so well-known from the ancient novel may have offered the historian his own escape from an isolation imposed on him (and other senators) by an imperial regime presided over by emperors who were far from the ideal. The use of fictive strategies reflects both the dangers to senators in the early third century and a certain perceived unreality of the emperors of the period, expressing Dio's experienced reality.

Fictive elements, though, are not Dio's only strategy for challenging his reader's understanding of historical fact. In his contribution, Porod argues that while Dio felt an obligation to follow his sources closely in constructing his historical narrative, he nonetheless challenges our interpretation of historical figures and events. This is evident in his treatment of Cicero, for which Dio followed a source tradition hostile to the republican orator. Dio makes clear that Cicero's political and personal shortcomings were the result of his overblown sense of his own political acumen, but the two direct speeches which Dio gives to Cicero present him as the wise statesman able to persuade his listeners in a critical moment and ready to defend the *res publica libera*. There are, then, two "versions" of Cicero in the text, one harshly critical and one more sympathetic, respectively. Where Dio invites us to consider different "versions" of Pompey based on later authors' interpretations of the great man,[39] he draws our attention to the differences between later authors' judgments of Cicero and the orator's own assessment of himself. Porod suggests that the more sympathetic version which emerges from the speeches more accurately represents Dio's own understanding of the orator. Cicero's meeting with Philiscus provides Dio with an additional opportunity to re-assess the "official" version of Cicero which he found in his hostile sources, and to move beyond an "overtly one-sided traditional [judgment]" (below, 375) of the republican orator. In particular, Dio uses Philiscus' advice to Cicero to write history to provide an anticipatory memorial long before his narrative reaches the point of Cicero's death. Dio relies on

39 Potter in this volume.

his reader's knowledge that Cicero will not take Philiscus' oracular advice to consider the relationship between political activity and historiography. As in the case of "versions" of Pompey, these "versions" of Cicero also allow Dio to raise the question of historical "truth" implicitly and to echo the contemporary conversation over control of the past and of imperial representation.

Dio's interest in the nature of historiography and his invitation to the reader to consider that nature are equally evident in his treatment of senatorial historians. As Kemezis argues, Dio saw the writing of history as a potentially dangerous practice. Dio refers to earlier senatorial historians as historical actors rather than as historians or as sources whose literary works could lend his own account greater authority, thereby inviting consideration of the short- and long-term consequences of writing history while participating in politics as well as the importance of historical authority. By focusing on the downfall of earlier senatorial historians, Dio suggests that writing history does not automatically add to a senator's personal authority and dignity but rather endangers one's status, reputation, and even life. Through his references to earlier senator-historians, Dio alludes to his own role and undertaking, recognizing the "diminished worth of his patrimony, literary as well as political" (below, 424) in the early third century. This recognition, ironically, lends to Dio's account of the realities of the late Severan period an authority independent of the (ineffectual) authority of the traditional senator-historian, even as it raises questions of the place of historiography in contemporary Rome and its ability to represent the reality of his times accurately.

1.4 *Hellenic Culture*

Several contributors to this volume focus on Dio's approach to the Roman past and present as a senatorial historian who attained the highest positions of the *cursus honorum* and had privileged access to the imperial court. His perspective, however, is not merely that of a Roman (or "Romanized") official or of a member of the *literati*, though these elements of his persona are evident. Equally important to understanding the complexity of his approach to history are the broader political and cultural discourses in which he produced his work and his own cultural identity as a Greek *pepaideumenos*. Until recently, the two components of Dio's identity, as a Roman senator and a Greek intellectual, have been regarded as distinct aspects of his work and personality, when in fact they are complementary.[40] Unlike many writers of the Second Sophistic, with whom he is now commonly associated, Dio displays little interest in the glories of the Hellenic past, but this does not preclude a historiographically significant

40 See, in particular, Burden-Strevens 2015.

engagement with Greek culture. The articles in this final section explore Dio's relationship with his Greek background, considering its role in shaping both his views and his expressions of Roman political reality. Overall, they argue that Dio's self-positioning and identification with the Roman ruling elite was not a rejection of or conscious distancing from his Hellenic roots or the ideas prevalent in Second Sophistic authors, but rather the result of his deep integration with the empire's government, which he analyzes in terms that were both Greek and Roman.[41] Although he does not display the Hellenocentric views of other Second Sophistic writers – who assert their Greek identity by stressing their provenance from culturally Greek cities and by expressing nostalgia for the "good old times" of free Greece – Dio framed his historical work within the Greek tradition of universal history and, significantly, chose to use the Greek language for his monumental project. The contributors to this final section consider some of the uses to which Dio puts his Greek cultural heritage.

In her article, Asirvatham explores how Dio employed the motif of bilingualism to assess individual emperors in terms of their ability to rule and, more subtly, to assert his own authority as a bilingual author and senator, able to assess the quality of an emperor. Bilingual education was by no means unusual for Roman elites, and Greek authors such as Plutarch often praise prominent Romans who had received a Greek education or displayed *paideia*, in the firm belief that this enhanced their personal and public qualities.[42] Dio shows a more nuanced approach, suggesting that bilingualism is not a guarantee of sound personality or good rule. Dio specifically comments on the bilingualism of Augustus, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Septimius Severus. In the cases of Augustus and Severus, knowledge of both Latin and Greek appears to be unproblematic and supports Dio's overall characterization of their reigns. For Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, on the other hand, Dio's references to bilingualism are more substantial and illustrate these emperors' shortcomings: overly ambitious literary aspirations and political failures caused by excessive intellectual activity, respectively. As Asirvatham argues, Dio positions himself as a bilingual expert in order to show how "bilingualism … can be correctly marshaled towards good politics" (below, 452).

Emotional references to Dio's early years in Asia Minor, proud accounts of local history or myth, and nostalgia for his homeland do not characterize his work; nonetheless, Dio appears to maintain a constant, though not overt, fascination with Nicaea and Bithynia more generally. Kuhn argues that scattered

41 Burden-Strevens 2015.

42 For the impact of *paideia* (or its lack), inclusive of the Greek language, on Roman figures in Plutarch, cf., for example, Pelling 2000; Swain 1990.

references to and comments on the world of Asia Minor have a historiographical function within Dio's text, as they both validate Dio's literary authority and contribute to the indirect characterization of emperors based on their involvement in the political and social life of the cities in the Asian provinces. For instance, accounts of natural disasters such as earthquakes provide opportunities for Dio to comment on imperial initiatives and liberality from a locally informed perspective. Likewise, references to the "Romanization" of eastern elites or, conversely, rebellions against Roman rule illustrate an emperor's broader approach to imperial administration, his willingness to expand Roman citizenship and related privileges, his *hybris* in imposing or encouraging the imperial cult, and his attempts at self-promotion. Kuhn argues that Dio's reports of natural marvels in Asia Minor ought to be read in the same key, as historiographical tools to interpret an emperor's behavior and, at the same time, to emphasize Dio's own authority to assess an emperor's capabilities – especially when he claims to be an eye-witness to unusual natural phenomena: Autopsy was crucial to assert Dio's "authority as a reliable historian" (below, 475).[43] Like Asirvatham, Kuhn minimizes the separation between Dio's dual identity as a Greek intellectual and a Roman senator: The two are deeply intertwined in his description of the events closely related to the center of power and in his mentions of events, however marginal, occurring in the Greek world.

Just as he acknowledged Severus' Greek-Latin bilingualism, Dio could hardly have ignored the provenance and upbringing of the emperor in the heavily Hellenized city of Lepcis Magna. In the last article of this collection, Rossiter & Brothers examine Dio's account, in Book 77, of the *ludi Saeculares* celebrated by Septimius Severus in 204 CE. They argue that Dio may have deliberately downplayed the Greek components of the festival, such as chariot races and dramatic events, in order to stress the propriety of the emperor's public behavior. Reading Dio's account of the *ludi* alongside the inscription that provides an account of the organization of the games,[44] Rossiter & Brothers show that Dio's extant account focuses on a particularly Roman form of entertainment, the *venatio*, to the exclusion of a number of Hellenic elements of the celebration. This, they argue, was an intentional choice designed to emphasize Severus' dignified approach to public spectacles. Elsewhere, Dio mentions public spectacles to criticize emperors – particularly Nero, Commodus, and Elagabalus – who indulged in activities that were unsuitable and even degrading for their role. By contrast, Severus is portrayed as "embrac[ing] the world of the circus … with dignity" (below, 495); Dio's emphasis on the *venationes*

43 Burden-Strevens 2015.

44 *CIL* VI 32326–32335.

during the *ludi* of 204 may have been intended to highlight Severus' adherence to Roman tradition and, through the hunt's symbolism, to Rome's orderly domination over the world.

One could say that Cassius Dio's *Roman History* does indeed lack an interpretative framework. For, as the articles in this volume collectively suggest, Dio actually includes *multiple* interpretative frameworks, allowing and encouraging his readers to engage in an ongoing conversation that is simultaneously political, social, literary, and cultural. That conversation – or, perhaps, those conversations – may at times be obscure, both because of the occasionally allusive nature of Dio's contributions, but also because of the loss of substantial portions of his text.

2 The Text of Cassius Dio's *Roman History*

Any work that deals with Cassius Dio in his contemporary setting naturally encounters this problem, since for most of the relevant years Dio has been lost in direct form and must be partially reconstructed from Byzantine epitomes and excerpts.[45] For most periods after Claudius, what remains constitutes perhaps 40 percent of the original text.[46] Exceptions are the reign of Antoninus Pius and the early part of Marcus' (for which we have scarcely any record of Dio's text) and that of Macrinus through the coup of Elagabalus (for which we have a nearly complete text in a separate manuscript tradition).[47]

For the rest of the period in question, the text that modern editions present as Dio's is mainly assembled from two sources, namely the "Constantinian *Excerpta*" and the epitome of Xiphilinus. The first of these is a series of sets of excerpts of Greek historians compiled in the early tenth century.[48] They range

45 The most succinct overview of the "textual problem" as a whole remains Millar 1964, 1–4. Subsequent studies (cited below) have much increased our understanding of particular channels of transmission, above all Xiphilinus, but an overall reassessment of the state of the fragmentary text and the means of its reconstruction remains a *desideratum*. Burden-Strevens 2019, 12–15 represents an exemplary step in this direction as regards Dio's regal-to-early-Republican narrative.

46 See the rough and perhaps optimistic calculations of Kemezis 2020, 259n. Zinsli 2017, 199, using a much more precise methodology for Xiphilinus alone, determined he transmitted about 25 percent of Dio's text for the two fully preserved Imperial-era books (53 and 79) that Zinsli examined.

47 For the problems surrounding Antoninus, see Juntunen 2013.

48 The *Excerpta* in their tenth-century context have received a thorough study from Németh 2018; Mallan 2019 adds a valuable perspective specific to Dio's early narrative. In general, our understanding of Byzantine historiography has deepened immensely in recent

in length anywhere from two lines to two pages and are arranged into thematic collections. For Dio's imperial narrative, the most important of these is the *Excerpts on Virtues and Vices* (often referred to as the *Excerpta Valesiana*).[49] These are our most secure witnesses to Dio's original words, since where excerpts can be compared to the directly transmitted text, we can see that the excerptors typically preserved continuous passages of *verbatim* text without adding material of their own.[50] They also retained the order in which the passages occurred in Dio's text. Therefore, if one has a passage of the *Excerpta*, one can be reasonably sure those are Dio's words, and one has a very rough idea where in his narrative they occurred. However, the passages in question are selected for their moral-evaluative content (or some other thematic feature) and, taken together, do not give a representative impression of Dio's overall content or narrative trajectory.

Xiphilinus presents something of a different case.[51] He was a monastic author writing in the late eleventh century, and his *Epitome* consists of a series of biographically organized sections on emperors, in which category he includes Julius Caesar and Pompey.[52] For most of these, Xiphilinus relies entirely on Dio, and his few dalliances with other authors are typically signposted. Comparisons with surviving text show that he does for the most part replicate or closely paraphrase Dio's exact words, including first-person statements, but in a less reliable fashion than the *Excerpta*.[53] He will sometimes paraphrase or cut and paste in ways that significantly alter the meaning

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decades. However, the aim of this work has not typically been to facilitate the use of these texts for the reconstruction of their sources.

49 Other channels of transmission include preserved excerpts of the early Byzantine historians Peter the Patrician and John of Antioch (for which see respectively Roberto 2016b and Roberto 2016a) that seem to be based on Dio, as well as occasional entries in the *Suda* and lexicographical and grammatical authors. Zonaras, who is an indispensable source for Dio's early narrative, is only occasionally useful in the later period because he often relies on Xiphilinus rather than consulting Dio directly (see Bellissime & Berbessou-Broustet 2016). While it cannot be doubted that parts of Herodian's somewhat later account draw on now-lost material in Dio, scholarship to date has yet to develop a satisfactory methodology for identifying those parts.

50 Exceptions do exist, and examples can be found in Boissevain 1895–1901, 3.767–775.

51 Several recent articles have considerably improved our understanding of Xiphilinus' methods and aims. See Mallan 2013; Berbessou-Broustet 2016; Biały 2017, Zinsli 2017 and Kruse 2021, with references to earlier studies. Among these, that of Brunt 1980 is particularly useful.

52 This latter decision is explored by Potter in his contribution to this volume. The sections on both Caesar and Pompey are much more compressed relative to the surviving text of Dio than are those on subsequent rulers for whom comparison is possible.

53 For the referent of first-person statements, see Berbessou-Broustet 2016, 85–87.

of Dio's original.[54] Thus, on the one hand, Xiphilinus is less reliable at the word-and-sentence level than the *Excerpta* while, on the other hand, he gives (if only by default) a somewhat more even and representative sample of the shape of Dio's text.[55] Even so, Xiphilinus does have predilections and agendas that motivate his selection and framing of Dionian content. Unsurprisingly given the political culture in which he lived, he is more interested in passages involving the character and conduct of the ruler than in the more "Republican" aspects of the principate. Similarly, items referring to familiar eastern areas of the earlier Roman world catch his interest more than material from the west. He is little interested in military affairs, but more so in Dio's erudite quotations and (less predictably) in his descriptions of omens and portents.[56]

What do the above observations mean in practical terms for what we can and cannot say about Dio in his own context? We have a good deal of material that is securely Dionian. We can rely on the mass of often quite personal anecdotes that Dio gives us about his own time and the overall character sketches he gives us of emperors and other figures. It is safe to say, for example, that Dio thought Commodus was a terrible ruler, and both Xiphilinus and the *Excerpta* give us some nuanced insights into what he thought was and was not terrible about him (e.g., 73[72].1). Thanks to the excerptors' interest in diplomacy, we also know details of the treaties he made with the Marcomanni and Buri (73[72].2–3). But neither the surviving excerpts nor Xiphilinus are concerned with detailed military narrative, so we know much less about the warfare that preceded those treaties (or followed them in other theatres, notably Britain), and it is an easy guess that military descriptions made up a substantial part of the missing 60 percent.

The riskier interpretive moves come when one argues (a) that Dio's surviving portrayal of a particular person, thing, or issue is representative of his text overall; (b) that the apparent sequence of thought shown in our surviving text represents the shape of Dio's original narrative; or (c) that because particular elements are absent or de-emphasized in our surviving text, the same was true in Dio's narrative overall. Such arguments require caution and circumspection but, nonetheless, this volume is committed to studying Dio's text as a coherent if imperfectly apprehended literary whole rather than a set of quotations. That calls for no small amount of inference and probabilistic reasoning based on what survives, and sometimes imaginative or speculative reconstruction

54 See examples in Mallan 2013, 626–630.

55 It is not unknown (though rare) for Xiphilinus to alter the order in which items occurred in Dio, see Berbessou-Broustet 2016, 88–89.

56 For selection criteria, see Mallan 2013, 617–625.

of what does not. This remains an art rather than a science and as such one cannot prescribe rules. There are certainly common-sense practices: If a pattern recurs often enough in our fragments, it probably represents a consistent practice of Dio's.[57] In determining whether elements absent from our surviving material existed in the full text, one can make inferences from comparable portions of the fully extant text and to the epitomators' treatment of those portions.[58] If the instances of a given phenomenon that we find in our complete text are reliably picked up by our excerptors, we can have at least some confidence that if we do *not* see that phenomenon at a particular point in our reconstructed text, it was not there in the first place.

Our contributors show a range of approaches, and not every reader will agree with all their interpretive decisions. They have all, however, striven to acknowledge textual issues in a way that will allow readers to understand and evaluate the interpretive claims and assumptions the contributors are making. As so often in ancient history, scholarship on Dio does include its share of overconfident pronouncements based on unwarranted certainties about the text, but we must avoid the converse danger of interpretations that are impoverished by diffidence and a positivistic unwillingness to turn isolated facts into any larger whole. Our contributors have tried in various ways to maneuver between those hazards. We encourage future students of the same material to build on their successes and failures in developing better-informed methodologies for studying this indispensable witness to his own times.

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57 As with Langford's argument that Dio's mentions of Julia Domna reliably correlate with situations in which her husband's dominance is in question.

58 E.g., Bertolazzi's considerations regarding Dio's downplaying of Julia Maesa's role, or Kemezis' arguments regarding Xiphilinus' treatment of speeches.

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PART 1

Political Theory and Commentary

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CHAPTER 1

Dio and Pompey: Explaining the Failure of the Republic

David S. Potter

In 130 CE Hadrian visited Egypt. The stop is most famous for the mysterious death of Antinous, Hadrian's lover. But that is not the only mystery. The author of the *Historia Augusta* says that Hadrian "built up the tumulus of Pompey more splendidly" (*HA Hadr.* 14.4: *tumulum magnificentius extruxit*). Dio reports that on this occasion Hadrian uttered a verse of his own: "What a strange tomb for a man overwhelmed with temples" (Cass. Dio 69.11.1: τῷ ναοῖς βρίθοντι πόση σπάνις ἔπλετο τύμβου) and rebuilt the memorial, which had fallen into ruin. In 202, Septimius Severus offered a sacrifice there.[1] Why did they care, and what can this tell us about the memory of the man whose 41-year public career filled more than 10% of a historical narrative, Dio's, whose temporal span was nearly a millennium?[2]

Not all that Dio has to say about Pompey or his memory is reliable. There is a genuine problem, for instance, with the memorial. Dio first mentions it when he describes Pompey's assassination, noting that he was buried near Mt. Casius having been warned in life, by "some oracle," (42.5.6 ἐκ χρησμοῦ τινος) to beware Cassius (which he had taken to be a warning about men named Cassius). The story that Pompey's remains lay by Mt. Casius was current in the age of Augustus, for Strabo says that they lay where he had been murdered, which was near a temple of Zeus at Mt. Casius.[3] But that does not mean it was true. There was another tradition that Cornelia, his widow, had deposited Pompey's

1 Cass. Dio. 76[75].13.1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. It is a pleasure to thank the organizers of the excellent conference on "Greek and Roman Pasts in the Long Second Century: The Intellectual Climate of Cassius Dio" at Banff in 2018 for their hospitality and their vision. Likewise, I owe a substantial debt to the Editors of this volume for sharpening the argument in this paper. The modern study of Cassius Dio takes its direction from the work of Fergus Millar. This paper is dedicated to Fergus' memory with deep gratitude for years of friendship and encouragement.

2 For the disproportionate extent of the late Republican narrative in Dio's history see Lintott 1997, 2497. The narrative covering Pompey's lifetime is nearly 10% of the history, while the number of years from the siege of Asculum in 89 to Pharsalus is roughly 5% of the history's chronological span.

3 Strabo 12.2.33. See also Plin. *HN* 5.68.

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ashes in a tomb by his Alban estate. This fact was known to Plutarch, who also reports that the body had been cremated on the beach, and to Lucan, which may mean that it appeared in the history composed by the Elder Seneca, an important source for the *Pharsalia*.[4]

Appian adds further details which contradict Dio's account. Appian says that someone buried the body on the seashore and set up a small memorial upon which were inscribed the words that Dio attributes to Hadrian. He then says that the bronze images erected by Pompey's family members at a later date on the site near Mt. Casius had been removed from the shrine and placed in a temple because the monument itself was covered by sand. In "my own time," he says, Hadrian retrieved the statues, enhanced the monument and set Pompey's images back up (*B Civ.* 2.86: ἐπ' ἐμοῦ). This relatively straightforward story is complicated a couple of chapters later when he says that Caesar could not bear to look at Pompey's head and had it buried in a small plot of land dedicated to Nemesis near Alexandria; Appian concludes, "in my time, when Trajan was emperor and annihilating the Jewish race in Egypt, it was devastated by them through the necessities of war" (*B Civ.* 2.90: ἐπ' ἐμοῦ κατὰ Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτορα Τραϊανόν, ἐξολλύντα τὸ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Ἰουδαίων γένος, ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐς τὰς τοῦ πολέμου χρείας κατηρείφθη).[5]

There can be no doubt that Pompey's remains were taken to Alba, which means that the shrine referred to by Dio and Appian (the one repaired by Hadrian and visited by Severus) was erected after the fact and that Appian is most likely correct in stating that it was done by members of Pompey's family. How long after the fact we cannot say, but the period of the brief ascendency of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus in the early years of Claudius' reign should be a strong possibility.[6] Since Cornelia never received her husband's head, there is no reason to doubt Appian's statement that there was a second monument, the one Caesar provided.

Appian had good reason to be interested in Pompey's monument as a tourist attraction in his native land. But that is not the only reason, for he had found Gnaeus Pompey a man of particular interest. His view had been shaped, it would appear, by the history composed by Theophanes of Mytilene (also an important source for Strabo, who was at pains to point out that Pompey was

4 Plut. *Pomp.* 80.6, 8; Lucan *Phars.* 9.991–992 (burial at Alba). For the connection between Lucan and the Elder Seneca's history see Berti 2020, 101–122; note also Gowing 2005, 86–80 on the memory of Pompey in Lucan, who shows no awareness of the Egyptian memorial.

5 Note also Val. Max. 5.1.10 (Caesar cremates the head).

6 Levick 1990, 61 on his relationship with Claudius and demise.

a famous man whose buildings improved the city of Rome).[7] Appian repeats the inflated statements of peoples and places subdued by Pompey known from other sources, and saw Pompey, as did Strabo, as a man who played a major role in constructing the Roman Empire in the East (*Mith.* 565–570). He was justly called the "great" because of the extent of the territory he brought under Roman control (*Mith.* 599) and because his exercise of "monarchical power" (μοναρχικῶς δυναστεύων) was more Republican (δημοτικῶς) than Caesar's (*B Civ.* 2.86). Theophanes, too, had a role in shaping the political order in which Greeks had a place. Strabo says that he showed himself to be the most outstanding of the Greeks and that his son, Pompeius Macer, procurator of Asia under Augustus, was said to be favored by Tiberius.[8] Macer was also a friend of Ovid, and his son was praetor in 15 CE, the first Greek from Asia to enter the Senate. He advanced no further and, in 33 he and his sister committed suicide when Tiberius exiled her on what appears to have been a charge of *maiestas*.[9] A point raised in the prosecution, reported by Tacitus, was the friendship of Theophanes and Pompey.[10] Tacitus mentions the charge presumably because, as was also true with the accusation that Cordus' admiration for Brutus and Cassius could be considered *maiestas* (*Ann.* 4.34–35), he thought it was ridiculous. Possibly also relevant was that Marcus Pompeius Macrinus "New Theophanes" held a suffect consulship in 115 CE.[11] The earlier Theophanes and his views were thus approved when Appian was at work.

Dio's view of Pompey is more critical than Appian's, but he is in no doubt about the fact that his murder was a criminal act. He connects Pompey's assassination with a curse that worked its way out first through the deaths of those responsible for the murder, then the enslavement of Egypt to Cleopatra and

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7 The key to identifying the source for the Appian's discussion of Pompey's campaign against Mithridates lies in Strabo's use of Theophanes for these campaigns, for which see *FGrH* 188 F. 3–7. The most significant parallel between Strabo and Appian's narrative concerns the Amazons, see *FGrH* 188 F 4 with App. *Mith.* 483; Plut. *Pomp.* 35.5–6 (*FGrH* 188 F. 1 is from Plut. *Pomp.* 37.4); for other connections see the notes on App. *Mith.* 465–466, 472, 479–480, and 490 in Goukowsky 2001; for Appian's handling of his material (he tends to follow one authority at a time) see Rich 2020, 333–343. For Strabo on Pompey's buildings at Rome (he combines his projects with those of Caesar, Augustus and Augustus' family) see Strabo 5.3.8.

8 Strabo 13.2.3. For the identity of Macer as a friend of Ovid see *PIR*^{2} P 625, also Halfmann 1979, 100.

9 *PIR*^{2} P 626.

10 Tac. *Ann.* 6.18. Tacitus had long-since composed the oration in which Galba said that Piso Licinianus' descent from Pompey and Crassus were amongst his qualifications to rule (Tac. *Hist.* 1.15.1 with Gowing 2005, 102).

11 *PIR*^{2} P 628; his grandson would be *consul ordinarius* in 164 (*PIR*^{2} P 627). Dio eschews reference to Theophanes of Mytilene.

finally Egypt's conquest by Rome. The implication is that there was a direct connection between the loss of freedom and Pompey's death. The story cannot be early since it is implausible to the highest degree that Augustus would have attributed the conquest of Egypt to a curse connected with Pompey. But since Plutarch also shows knowledge of a tradition about the dire fates of Pompey's assassins there can be no doubt that the seed from which Dio's story emerged was known in the first century CE. The development of this invented tradition suggests that Pompey's reputation as a man who exercised a decisive influence over the shape of the Roman Empire grew with the passing of time.[12]

Although Dio's portrait of Pompey shares some traits of Appian's – the view that Pompey played a significant role in the empire's growth – it is altogether more complex and influenced by a diversity of traditions. For Dio, there is the Pompey who plays a central role in the demise of the Republic through his jealousy of Caesar in the fifties BCE. This jealousy undermines the glory Pompey won in the previous decade. It was a story of Pompey's life that was established by the time of Tiberius, as it informs Velleius' portrait of the man.[13] Pompey's other aspect is as a significant figure in the history of Roman law and institutions, a subject of interest to Dio because one of his themes is the way institutional failure undermined the Republic.[14] Pompey's importance as a legislator can elsewhere be seen as an aspect of his reputation in the first century CE since Tacitus inserts Pompey in his digression on the history of Roman law (*Ann.* 3.28). He is a man who imposed remedies harsher than the wrongs they were intended to correct and then subverted his own measures. Dio spells out Pompey's historical significance in Book 52 where Agrippa lists him ("at first") with Marius, Sulla and Metellus as people who did not try to seize supreme power when they might have done, then with the leaders of the Cinnan party as people who tried but failed to achieve supreme power.[15] Maecenas summarizes Dio's view even more clearly when he states that Pompey became an object of scorn once he had given up supreme power and lost his life when he could not regain it (53.17.3). This point about Pompey had come out very clearly in the preceding narrative.

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12 Cass. Dio 42.3.4. The notion of a curse also appears in Plut. *Pomp*. 80.5–6 where Plutarch records the fates of Pompey's killers.

13 Vell. Pat. 2.29.4.

14 Coudry 2019b, 36–49; Lindholmer 2019b, 72–96.

15 Dio 53.13.2. The Metellus in question is the consul of 80 BCE who disbanded his army after returning from Spain see Reinhold 1988, 178; Swan 2004, 332. The *exempla* (as Reinhold points out) of those who tried to seize power align with Cicero's speech after the death of Caesar (Cass. Dio 46.28.1–2).

The importance of Pompey both to Dio's understanding of the origins of the principate's institutional origins, and to his understanding of the failure of "democracy" is made obvious by John Xiphilinus' decision to begin his *Epitome of Twenty-Five Emperors from Pompey and Caesar* with book 36.[16] At first glance, this is a reading of Dio that would seem to flatly contradict Dio's own statement in book 52 that Augustus' sole reign, and hence the monarchy, should be dated to September 2, 31 BCE.[17] But, as Dio's discussion of the transition to μοναρχία through the debate between Agrippa and Maecenas in Book 52 shows, Xiphilinus' reading was subtle and correct: A new phase of Roman history opened with the passage of the *lex Gabinia* in 67 BCE, as stated in Book 36 of Dio. This is plain not only from the techniques Dio uses to introduce the law but also from the model of Roman history that Dio explores in book 52. According to this model, the initial μοναρχία, which was never very successful, failed when it turned into tyranny (52.9.2–5). The succeeding δημοκρατία was wildly successful, as Rome was transformed into a great power, but the system was unable to function when it grew too big.[18] The new phase of even

16 For Xiphilinus' plan, turning Dio's history into "biographical sections", see Mallan 2013, 617; for his stress on Pompey's monarchical status see esp. 626–633. See also Berbessou-Broustet 2016. For the reasons given in the text I think Xiphilinus did not choose his starting point because the earlier books were not available (see also Kruse 2021). They were available to the editors of the Constantinian *Excerpta* and it would be unwise to generalize from the state of the library with which Zonaras dealt a century later.

17 Millar 1964, 2; Cass. Dio 51.1.1. Dio did not see the end of the democracy (noted as the consequence of Philippi) as coincidental with the establishment of the monarchy, it is rather the triumph of δυναστεία; see 47.39.2. Tiberius identifies αὐτονομία with factional strife in his eulogy for Augustus, 56.39.5. For the use of αὐτονομία as a synonym for δημοκρατία see 43.20.3 and 45.35.1–2. For the monarchy as the salvation of Rome see Ameling 1997, 2480–2482.

18 Cass. Dio 52.9.5, 16.2; note also Cass. Dio 47.39.5, speaking for himself with discussion in Fromentin & Bertrand 2014, l–li. For Dio's scheme of Rome's development see also Coudry 2019a and n. 17 above. For the reasons that emerge in the text, I cannot accept the views of Lange 2019, 185 that the difference between the civil wars of the late Republic and earlier periods of internal strife was "only one of scale, if at all, and that these features were the product of a long development that originated with the kings – who, unlike Augustus, were tyrants," and that "*Dynasteia* and *bellum civile* may primarily be factors related to the outgoing Republic, but only as an expression of inherent problems within the system." The latter statement confuses a process (*bellum civile*) with what, in Greek political thought, was a form of government. On this point see the usage in Thuc. 3.62.3: ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ἡ πόλις τότε ἐτύγχανεν οὔτε κατ' ὀλιγαρχίαν ἰσόνομον πολιτεύουσα οὔτε κατὰ δημοκρατίαν ὅπερ δέ ἐστι νόμοις μὲν καὶ τῷ σωφρονεστάτῳ ἐναντιώτατον, ἐγγυτάτω δὲ τυράννου, δυναστεία ὀλίγων ἀνδρῶν εἶχε τὰ πράγματα ("In our time, it happened that the city was not governed by an oligarchy guaranteeing equal laws nor by a democracy; but by what is the opposite extreme of law and orderly government, and closest to a tyranny: a cabal [δυναστεία] of a few men held power"); cf. Ar. *Pol.* 1292 b 4–10, 1293a 31. I also

greater expansion resulting from Pompey's defeat of Mithridates and Caesar's conquest of Gaul was δυναστεία, or a period characterized the exercise of personal power that is "on the margin of legality".[19] In Dio's view, this created a situation that permitted deeply corrupt behavior on the part of self-seeking individuals, even if the leading dynasts were themselves people of great ability,

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have difficulty seeing that Thuc. 3.82 has particular relevance for Dio's thinking on the subject with reference to the government of the Roman Republic. For Thucydides, the issue of faction is not limited to democracies; it is a feature of both democracies and oligarchies (he does not contrast these forms of political organization with monarchy). So, while Lange (p. 172) is correct that Thucydides sees *stasis* as a result of the war, *stasis* is not a function of a particular sort of government, but a possible consequence of the poor behavior of the governing class. For Thucydides δημοκρατία is contrasted with ὀλιγαρχία, on which point note especially Thuc. 8.97.2: καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα δὴ τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον ἐπί γε ἐμοῦ Ἀθηναῖοι φαίνονται εὖ πολιτεύσαντες· μετρία γὰρ ἥ τε ἐς τοὺς ὀλίγους καὶ τοὺς πολλοὺς ξύγκρασις ἐγένετο καὶ ἐκ πονήρων τῶν πραγμάτων γενομένων τοῦτο πρῶτον ἀνήνεγκε τὴν πόλιν ("and not least was the fact that for the first time in my lifetime the Athenians appeared to be well governed, for there arose a moderate blending of the few with the many, and after these miserable events the city was again able to lift its head") and Gomme, Andrewes & Dover (1981), 336 stressing the point that Thucydides is concerned with leadership, and how it behaves in specific situations. Likewise, at 3.82, Thucydides is not interested in the role of *stasis* in the progression of a state from one form to another, but rather in the degeneration of states that are the victims of dreadful leadership. In the context of Lange's argument, it should be noted that στασιάζω has an extremely wide semantic range that cannot be interpreted as being dependent on Thucydides, see, e.g., Dio 40.32.5; 42.33.1; 46.16.2; 57.14.10 (riot); 36.15.2; 36.16.3; 41.26.1; 57.5.4; 79.19.3 (military mutiny); 7.29.4–5 (from the *excerpta*); 54.12.1 (factional strife); 43.18.2 (sedition); 26.15.2 (dispute); 40.14.2; 51.18.2 (fight a civil war). Dio's term for "civil war" is more often ἐμφύλιος, see Cass. Dio 37.24.2; 38.17.4; 42.9.3; 46.12.1; 47.6.2; 52.27.3; 52.42.2; 53.9.3; 56.37.2; 56.44.1; 64.13.1; 71.26.4; 71.27.2; 75.4.1; and 78.28.1, as noted by Lange (2018), 167. Lindholmer 2018b correctly points out that aspects of δυνσατεία are present throughout the earlier Republic, but the passages listed at the beginning of this note, as well as 52.1.1 (ταῦτα μὲν ἔν τε τῇ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ δημοκρατίᾳ ταῖς τε δυναστείαις, πέντε τε καὶ εἴκοσι καὶ ἑπτακοσίοις ἔτεσι, καὶ ἔπραξανοί Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ ἔπαθον ["these were the things the Romans achieved and suffered under the kingship, and in the democracy and in the *dynasteia* over the course of seven hundred and twenty-five years"]) seem to me to indicate quite clearly that he saw the period from the *lex Gabinia* to Actium as a discrete period of Roman history (which has been the traditional view as Lindholmer points out); see further n. 17 above. As was also true of Thucydides, Dio understood *dynasteia* to be a particularly corrupt from of oligarchic government (see also the usage at 47.39.2 in which the term is contrasted with a synonym, αὐτονομία, for δημοκρατία: τότε δὲ οἱ μὲν ἐς δυναστείαν αὐτοὺς ἦγον, οἱ δὲ ἐς αὐτονομίαν ἐξῃροῦντο ["then the one side was compelling them to *dynasteia*, the other was urging them toward democracy"]). As is also true of Thucydides, Dio can see *stasis* as the result of a form of government (hence the range of situations for which he uses the word).

19 For this translation see M.-L. Freyburger-Galland (1996): 27 (note especially Cass. Dio 39.55.2: τοσοῦτον γὰρ αἵ τε δυναστεῖαι καὶ αἱ τῶν χρημάτων περιουσίαι καὶ παρὰ τὰ ψηφίσματα τά τε τοῦδήμου καὶ τὰ τῆς βουλῆς ἴσχυσαν).

as Caesar and Pompey (again, in Dio's view) were.[20] It was Augustus' genius (following the advice of Maecenas) which enabled the creation of a new form of μοναρχία which absorbed the best elements of senatorial administration from the δημοκρατία.[21]

The proper understanding of the way μοναρχία came into being was especially important to Dio, in light of the fact that Septimius Severus was badly informed on this point. Severus displayed his ignorance in the speech he delivered to the Senate in 197 CE. As Dio reports it, the emperor praised the severities of Marius, Sulla and Augustus while deprecating the milder conduct of Caesar and Pompey. For Dio, Marius and Sulla were not precursors of the μοναρχία, and Severus has misunderstood the importance of Augustus' incorporation of elements of the δημοκρατία into his system of government.[22] Severus' misunderstanding was shared by Caracalla, who also saw Sulla as a role model.[23] As Dio has Tiberius say in his eulogy of Augustus, though, Augustus was in no way like Sulla.[24]

Dio's interest in Severus' understanding of Republican history is combined with his own interest in moments that anticipate the linkage of δημοκρατία with μοναρχία, which he sees as the key to the Augustan principate.[25] That point was obviously hidden from the view of the historians who developed the standard Republican narrative with which Dio engaged.[26] As a senator, Dio is very conscious of the fact that he is a member of an institution that was centuries older than the office of emperor.[27] The process of wrestling the story of the late Republic into a form that would be relevant to a third-century senatorial

20 For men using inferior men with bad consequences see Cass. Dio 52.15.5; note also 52.26.5–6 on the importance of educating the upper class in virtuous conduct, and Cass. Dio 56.41.3.

21 Note esp. Cass. Dio 52.15.1; 52.19.2–3, and 56.41.3.

22 For Sulla see Cass. Dio 52.13.2 and 53.17.3–4; on Severus' speech, see Perry in this volume.

23 Cass. Dio 76[75].8.1–4 with Urso 2016. For Caracalla, who restored Sulla's tomb (Cass. Dio 78.13.7), see also *HA Carac*. 2.1, 4.10, 5.3 (presumably from Marius Maximus), with Zanin 2020, 363–367 on Sulla.

24 Dio 56. 38.1. On the significance see Swan 2004, 332.

25 Dio 52.19.1; 56.43. 4 with Millar 1964, 74; see also Rich 1989; Kemezis 2014, 107–109.

26 On the multiplicity of Dio's sources, as opposed to the use of Livy, as argued by Schwartz 1957, 426–438 see Lintott 1997, 2519–2521; Gowing 1992, 43–44. While it seems quite reasonable to think that Dio read Cremutius Cordus' history along with others, it seems to me to go too far to hold that Cordus was the dominant source for Dio's account of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey as well as the triumviral period (as argued in Westall 2016), especially given the points of contact between Dio's vision of the late Republic and that evident in Velleius, whom one can scarcely imagine would have betrayed an interest in interpretations that could be associated with Cordus.

27 See esp. Millar 1964, 181, 189–190; Adler 2012, 520.

audience was not always smooth. An examination of the portrait of Pompey will also cast some light on Dio's interaction with the tradition he inherited. For Dio, his interpretative frame will at times be more important than strict factual accuracy.

Xiphilinus' starting point allows some conclusions to be drawn about Dio's handling of Pompey prior to 68 BCE. Pompey might have appeared in Dio's account of the siege of Asculum, where he served on his father's staff; he certainly appeared in 87 BCE when Dio says he returned to Picenum because of his anger with those who were in control of the city (fr. 107). He would then reappear in the context of Sulla's invasion as well as the subsequent wars against Aemilius Lepidus, Sertorius and Spartacus. In all these places he would act as a subordinate to the government of the Republic; that would even be true in the year of his first consulship, which concluded book 35, and where there would presumably have been some comment on the restoration of the power of the tribunes whose legislative activities will attract Dio's attention, usually with disapproval, down to the beginning of the civil war in 49 BCE.[28]

For Dio, and indeed, to judge from Velleius, for earlier historians, Pompey's position only changed with the passage of the *lex Gabinia*. For Dio, the significance of this piece of legislation is underscored by narrative dislocation, a digression, an extensive speech in *oratio recta*, three of Dio's five principal methods of indicating the particular importance of a moment in time (the fourth is a prodigy list and the fifth, a discussion of a person's inner thoughts).[29]

Book 36 opens with "a series of focalizations," first on Metellus, and then on Lucullus to arrive at the key moment, the passage of the *lex Gabinia*.[30] First Lucullus is discussed, then Dio points out (36.4.1) that Lucius Metellus was sole consul for this year because his colleague, Marcius Rex, died at the beginning of the year and that Servilius Vatia, elected to replace him, also died before taking office. The circumstance anticipates the sole consulship of Pompey

28 Cass. Dio 36.38.2 (commenting on the significance of the restoration of tribunician powers); see also 36.38.4–40.2 (the tribunate of Cornelius in 67 BCE); 36.42; 36.44.1–2 (Roscius and Manilius in 66 BCE); 37.25.3 (tribunician proposals in 63 BCE); 37.26 (trial of Rabirius, note especially 37.26.2: οἱ δὲ δήμαρχοι τήν τε ἰσχὺν καὶ τὴν ἀξίωσιν τῆς βουλῆς καταλῦσαι παντελῶς ἐσπούδαζον, καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἑαυτοῖς τοῦ πάνθ' ὅσα βούλοιντο ποιεῖν προπαρεσκεύαζον); 37.43 (Metellus Nepos in 62 BCE); 38.12–16 (tribunate of Clodius in 58 BCE); 39.6–8 (Milo and the return of Cicero); 39.33–35 (tribunate of Trebonius in 55 BCE); 39.39.5–6 (tribunician opposition to Crassus' departure for the east); and 40.45 (tribunician activity in 53 BCE).

29 For narrative dislocation see Lintott 1997, 2504–2508; for speeches see Rodgers 2008, 317–318; Adler 2012; Burden-Strevens 2016; Fomin 2016; for digressions see Millar, *Cassius Dio*, 181; for prodigies see Millar 1964, 77; for inner thoughts see pp. 49, 52.

30 See Lintott 1997, 2505–2506; Lachenaud & Coudry 2014, 57 n. 80.

for much of 52 BCE. Attention returns to the failure of Roman operations as Lucullus is now inactive because of the mutiny at Nisibis, and Mithridates takes advantage of the situation to retake Pontus, a campaign that occupied the latter part of 68 and set the stage for the *lex Manilia* later in the book. The theme of δυναστεία now arises in the context of Metellus' campaign in Crete (36.12–17). He had been consul in 69 and his passion for δυναστεία led him to attack Cretans who had previously made an arrangement with Pompey, a statement that implies that Pompey is already operating under the *lex Gabinia*.[31] By the time Dio arrives at the *lex Gabinia*, he has already shown that Pompey's power will be superior to that of a standard Republican magistrate because Cretan pirates were willing to surrender to him so they did not have to deal with Metellus, and the soldiers felt he was more agreeable than Lucullus. Dio reports that Lucullus' mutinous legions, originally recruited to serve under Valerius Flaccus in 86 BCE, were happy to serve under Pompey.[32] Still, the introduction of the *lex Gabinia* is postponed, now by a digression on the history of the pirates.[33] The digression itself differs from other digressions on the pirates (in Appian and Plutarch's biography of Pompey, for example) by stressing that the size of the empire was a threat to Roman institutions, a point to which Dio will return.[34]

Emphatic delay continues even into the introduction of the *lex Gabinia*. Before getting on to the actual bill, Dio gives a brief analysis (wholly negative) of Gabinius (36.23.4), adding that he was unsure if Gabinius acted on his own or out of a desire to gratify Pompey. Gabinius was such an appalling person that he would never have acted out of regard for the public interest, which also serves to introduce the point that will now become increasingly important, that struggles for δυναστεία empower dreadful people.

After describing the senatorial reaction to the bill, Dio produces three speeches in *oratio recta*. The first describes Pompey's interest in the command (36.24.5):

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31 Cass. Dio 36.18.1: δυναστίας τε ἐρῶν καὶ τοῖς Κρησὶ τοιῖς ὁμολοηήσασιν αὐτῷ προέβαλε "through his partisan passion he attacked the Cretans who had made a treaty with Pompey." See also Bertrand 2019, 24.

32 Cass. Dio 36.16.3; compare Plut. *Lucull.* 33.2–3 (based on Sallust). See also Lindholmer 2018a, 143–150.

33 Cass. Dio 36.20–22. Despite the tendency of modern translators to introduce Pompey at this point (e.g., "I will now relate the progress of Pompey's career," [Cary, Loeb translation] and "je vais maintenant raconter comment les choses se passèrent pour Pompée" [Lachenaud & Coudry 2014, 13], he is not present in this sentence: λέξω δὲ ἤδη καὶ τὰ κατὰ τοῦτον πῶς ἐγένετο.

34 Coudry 2016, 36–37.

> ὁ Πομπήιος ἐπιθυμῶν μὲν πάνυ ἄρξαι, καὶ ἤδη γε ὑπό τε τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φιλοτιμίας καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς τοῦ δήμου σπουδῆς οὐδὲ τιμὴν ἔτι τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ἀτιμίαν τὸ μὴ τυχεῖν αὐτοῦ νομίζων εἶναι.
>
> Pompey was eager to command because of his own love of glory and because the enthusiasm of the people meant that receipt of the appointment would not have been as much of an honor as failure to get it would have been a disgrace.

Dio's observation that Pompey desired to be seen to be asked to do something rather than to come straight out and say what he wanted is both borne out by Dio's narrative and an actual quality noted less politely by Caelius when he wrote that Pompey had a habit of thinking one thing and saying another but was not clever enough to cover up what he really wanted.[35]

The structure of the debate is Dio's own. First off, the introduction of Gabinius is in line with Dio's handling of the same person later. Secondly, Pompey's speech has the principal hallmarks of Dio's handiwork: quotations from a Ciceronian speech improved with Demosthenic tags.[36] Finally, there is the question as to whether Pompey would even have been present. Plutarch says he was not, and the fact that Pompey's speech foreshadows the Augustan *recusatio* suggests that Dio has created it to stress the connection between the *lex Gabinia* and the later legislation for Augustus. Gabinius then responds to Pompey's points in a speech that thoroughly misrepresents recent events.[37] Finally, there is Catulus' speech, a speech for which there is no contemporary record, though the notion he spoke against this measure as well as the Manilian law in the following year had entered the historiographic tradition by the time of Velleius. Dio's version of the speech is based on Cicero's account of the speeches that Catulus and Hortensius actually did deliver against the Manilian law.[38] In his own handling of the Manilian law, Dio emphasizes the way that political competition is changing the nature of military commands

35 Cass. Dio 36.24.5–6. See also Cic. *Fam.* 8.1.3 (Caelius) and *Att.* 4.1.6. Note also Vell. Pat. 2.31.2–3; Plut. *Pomp.* 25.2; App. *Mith.* 94 on the "monarchical" nature of the position. See also Vervaet 2010, 146–149; for the significance of Dio's view (obviously Pompey did not see himself as anticipating Augustus) see Hurlet 2010, 109–110; 114 (noting that no contemporary source saw the *lex Gabinia* as promoting *regnum*).

36 Rodgers 2008, 313–318.

37 Although the speech is Dio's, the content mirrors that of standard Pompeian discourse in which his military achievement figured heavily see van der Blom 2011. For Gabinius see Lindholmer 2018a, 153.

38 Compare Cass. Dio 36.31.3 and 36.33.1 with Cic. *Leg. Man.* 60 and Cass. Dio 36.32.1 with Cic. *Leg. Man.* 52. See also Vell. Pat. 2.32.1.

as the Senate loses control of the appointment process in the face of popular support for Pompey and, later, Caesar.[39]

There are two issues between Dio's digression on the *lex Gabinia* and the formation of his alliance with Caesar where the "institutional" Pompey comes to the fore. These concern the acceptance of honors and Pompey's policy towards Parthia. The Parthians, like the pirates, will be formally introduced with a long digression at the point at which their actions have a significant impact on Roman affairs. That will be several books later, at the beginning of Crassus' campaign where Dio writes that this is "the beginning of the wars for the Romans against them" (40.14.1: αὕτη μὲν ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις τοῦ πρὸς αὐτοὺς πολέμου ἐγένετο). There he goes on to point out that once the Arsacids established satrapies in Mesopotamia (40.14.2–3)

> ὥστε καὶ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις τότε τε ἀντιπολεμῆσαι καὶ δεῦρο ἀεὶ ἀντίπαλοι νομίζεσθαι. εἰσὶ μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἄλλως ἰσχυροὶ τὰ πολέμια, μεῖζον δ' ὅμως ὄνομα, καίτοι μήτε τῶν Ῥωμαίων τι παρῃρημένοι καὶ προσέτι καὶ τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἔστιν ἃ προεμένοι, ἔχουσιν, ὅτι μηδέπω δεδούλωνται, ἀλλὰ καὶ νῦν ἔτι τοὺς πολέμους.
>
> They became able to fight the Romans and they are always held to be rivals. They are powerful in war, though somewhat overrated as they are not able to take territory from the Romans, but surrender some to them, but they have never submitted and to this day they hold their own in conflicts with us.

But they are not relevant at this earlier point because Pompey is wise. The importance of this moment is suggested by some foreshadowing of Pompey's contact with them. The Parthian king Arsaces, who was at war with Tigranes, had approached Lucullus about an alliance at the beginning of Book 36 (36.3.2), and at the end of the book, Dio mentions the flight of the younger Tigranes to Phraates (36.51). He reintroduces the whole business afresh for Pompey in book 37.[40] There are two particular points of interest here. One is Dio's observation that Pompey refused to address Phraates as King of Kings; the other is

39 Compare Cass. Dio 36.42–44 with Lindholmer 2018a, 159.

40 Cass. Dio 37.5; the pre-existing treaties at 37.5.2 (Φραάτης δὲ ἔπεμψε μὲν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀνανεώσασθαι τὰς συνθήκας ἐθέλων) are presumably an agreement with Lucullus. On the question of whether this fixed the boundary between the two empires (which it plainly had not, given the movements of Gabinius in Mesopotamia) see Sherwin-White 1983, 222–223 and Syme 1995, 89; see further the excellent discussion in Lachenaud & Coudry 2014, 136 nn. 26–28.

Dio's praise of Pompey's moderation in not attacking Parthia.[41] Dio will also later remark that Severus' aggressive policy towards Parthia was unsuccessful and expensive (75[75].3.2–3).

The second "institutional moment" comes in the wake of Pompey's return to Brundisium, where Dio discusses his modesty in accepting honors. The theme is one to which Dio will return in Caesar's case, but of Pompey he says (37.21.3–4):

> οὐ μέντοι καὶ ἐπωνυμίαν τινὰ προσεπέθετο, ἀλλὰ καὶ μόνῃ τῇ τοῦ Μάγνου, ἥνπερ που καὶ πρὸ ἐκείνων τῶν ἔργων ἐκέκτητο, ἠρκέσθη. οὐ μὴν οὐδ' ἄλλην τινὰ τιμὴν ὑπέρογκον λαβεῖν διεπράξατο, ἢ τοῖς γε ψηφισθεῖσιν ἀπόντι οἱ πλὴν ἅπαξ ἐχρήσατο. ἦν δὲ ταῦτα δαφνηφορεῖν τε αὐτὸν κατὰ πάσας ἀεὶ τὰς πανηγύρεις, καὶ τὴν στολὴν τὴν μὲν ἀρχικὴν ἐν πάσαις αὐτὴν δὲ ἐπινίκιον ἐν τοῖς τῶν ἵππων ἀγῶσιν ἐνδύνειν
>
> [Pompey] did not give himself any other surname but contented himself with "the Great," which he had acquired as a result of his other exploits, nor did he receive any other excessive honor and refused those which had been voted in his absence, with one exception, that he could wear a laurel crown at public festivals as well as a *toga praetexta* and triumphal garb at chariot races.[42]

Dio goes on to say that Pompey avoided these honors because he was aware that they merely concealed the hatred of the people who were voting them, as such votes arose from flattery rather than goodwill (37.23.3):

> καὶ πολύ γε τοῦτο βέλτιον εἶναι ἔλεγεν ἢ ψηφισθέντα μὴ προσίεσθαι· ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῷ μίσός τε ἐπὶ τῇ δυναστείᾳ ὑφ' ἧς ἐγιγνώσκετο, καὶ ὑπερηφανίαν καὶ ὕβριν τῷ μὴ δέχεσθαι τὰ διδόμενα παρὰ τῶν κρειττόνων δῆθεν ἢ πάντως γε τῶν ὁμοίων ἐνεῖναι, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἑτέρῳ τὸ δημοτικὸν ὄντως καὶ ὄνομα καὶ ἔργον οὐκ ἀπ' ἐνδείξεως ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀληθείας ὑπάρχειν.
>
> He said it was far better not to reject what had been voted for that arouses hatred for the power which originated the decision, that it is regarded

41 Cass. Dio 37.6.1–2. Pompey's conduct echoes Lucullus' with respect to Tigranes (Plut. *Lucull*. 21.7).

42 On this see also Vell. Pat. 2.40.4. Dio's error with respect to the date at which Pompey assumed his *cognomen* (on which see, correctly, Plut. *Pomp*. 13.4–5) is shared at App. *B Civ.* 2.86 and 2.91 as well as Livy *Per*. 103.

> as arrogant and insolent not to receive things granted by superiors or equals, and in other ways behaving in a popular way in word and deed, not for show but in reality.

The word that I have translated as "in a popular way" is δημοτικὸν. For Dio, this is an important concept. It is the quality that Augustus shows in the settlement of 27 BCE when he hands over control of the unarmed provinces to the Senate (53.12.1), and that Tiberius shows at the beginning of his reign when he does not permit special celebration of his birthday or allow people to swear by his fortune or, if they have done so, will not prosecute them for perjury if they break their oath (57.8.3). Pertinax exhibits this quality when he asks to be called the chief of the Senate, showing humanity and integrity in the management of imperial affairs (74[73].5.1). Conversely, Dio notes that Caesar turned down many of the honors voted to him after Thapsus (43.14.7) and Munda (43.46.1), and this, we learn, was regarded as arrogance. In his account of 44 BCE (44.3.1–3), Dio says Caesar had aroused dislike that was not altogether inexplicable in that he did sometimes behave as if he believed that he deserved the novel honors voted to him, but that the senators who voted the honors should not have complained insofar as they were responsible for Caesar's conduct. The people who were most responsible for the hatred of Caesar were those who led him to seek more honors after he had been honored appropriately. Interestingly, Dio draws no conclusions from the vows that cities took for Pompey's health in the summer of 50 BCE. He records the events in the context of preparations to fight Caesar in 49 BCE rather than in their proper place and simply states that no such honors had been voted to anyone before "those holding all power" came into existence. Plutarch had placed greater significance on the event, saying that it deluded Pompey into thinking he was more powerful than he was.[43]

"Institutional" Pompey recurs several times in the next decade as Dio correctly explains his role in facilitating the legislation which enabled Cicero's return in 57 BCE, and he notes that, with the two men reconciled, Cicero could support the law granting Pompey control of Rome's grain supply – albeit incorrectly adding that Pompey was given the power of proconsul in Italy, a position that would foreshadow Augustus' position after 23 BCE.[44] He provides useful details of the *lex Trebonia*, conferring commands in Spain and Syria to Pompey and Crassus, respectively, in 55 BCE, and notes the passage of electoral

43 Cass. Dio 41.6.5; Plut. *Pomp.* 57.1–6.

44 Cass. Dio 39.9.2; see also Plut. *Pomp.* 49.6–7 (also overstated). For the actual terms of the law see Cic. *Att.* 4.1.6–7. For Augustus see Cass. Dio 53.32.5.

legislation, albeit with minimal detail in the same year.[45] His account of Pompey's judicial legislation in 52 BCE is solid and his view that the *lex Pompeia de provinciis* was essentially a measure to constrain electoral corruption in the wake of the scandal that encompassed the consular elections for 53 BCE is reasonable.[46] The detail Dio provides about a failed effort to pass similar legislation in 53 BCE provides context for the law on provincial government.[47] Where Dio is eccentric is with regard to legislation connected with Caesar after 59. He gives a reasonably accurate summary of the two laws of 59 BCE creating Caesar's command but omits Pompey's role in support of the law which added Gallia Transalpina to the two provinces originally granted by the *lex Vatinia*.[48] Far worse, he states that the *lex Licinia-Pompeia* only extended Caesar's command for three years in 55 BCE, even though he correctly describes the law of the ten tribunes in 52 BCE giving Caesar the right to stand for the consulship in absence, and properly notes that Pompey needed to amend his electoral law after the fact when friends of Caesar objected that it seemed to invalidate the earlier law.[49] The variation in the accuracy of Dio's accounts may not be entirely his fault. The notion that Caesar's command was only for eight years, to which Dio is committed, is also in Appian. The worst perhaps that can be said of Dio is that he has chosen a version of the legislative record that corresponds to his understanding of Pompey's relationship to Caesar.

Returning to the narrative of Pompey's career, Dio introduces a significant break in the autumn of 62 BCE, calling attention to the importance of the moment by deranging the narrative so that Pompey's arrival in Italy at the end of 62 precedes the tale of Catiline's conspiracy at the end of the previous year.[50] The return is the decisive moment, when, undone by his own sense of decency, Pompey dismisses his army. Dio is here signaling what he perceives as an important fact about Pompey (a point that Agrippa will emphasize later), that he is moderate in his ambitions (37.20.3–5):

45 Cass. Dio 39.33.2 (*lex Trebonia*); 39.37.1 (electoral legislation).

46 Cass. Dio 40.46.2 (*lex Pompeia de provinciis*); 40.52.1 (law courts).

47 Cass. Dio 40. 46.2 with Steel 2012.

48 Cass. Dio 38.8.5 (laws of 59, with Cic. *Att*. 8.3.3 with respect to Pompey's role in support of the second law; for a similar statement to Dio's with respect to this see Suet. *Iul*. 22.1; Plut. *Caes*. 14.10 notes Pompey's role but misstates the process; Vell. Pat. 2.44.5 is vague).

49 Cass. Dio 39.33.3 (*lex Licinia-Pompeia*). This version of the law is one to which Dio is committed, see also 40.44.2, 40.59.3 and 44.43.2 where Antony says that Caesar's command was for eight years. Appian has the same view (*B Civ*. 2.25.26); on the issue see also Lintott 1997, 2512–2513. Cass. Dio 40.51.2 (law of the ten tribunes; see also Cic. *Att*. 7.1.4; 7.3.4; 8.3.3; Caes. *BCiv* 1.9.2; 1.32.2–3; Suet. *Iul*. 26.1); Cass. Dio 40.46.2 (see also Suet. *Iul*. 28.2; Cic. *Att*. 8.3.3).

50 Baron 2019, 58–63.

> ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μέν, καίπερ μεγάλα τε ὄντα καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν πρόσθε Ῥωμαίων πραχθέντα, καὶ τῇ τύχῃ καὶ τοῖς συστρατευσαμένοις οἱ ἀναθείη ἄν τις ὃ δὲ δὴ μάλιστα αὐτοῦ τε τοῦ Πομπηίου ἔργον ἐγένετο καὶ θαυμάσαι διὰ πάντων ἄξιόν ἐστι, τοῦτο νῦν ἤδη φράσω. πλείστην μὲν γὰρ ἰσχὺν καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ ἠπείρῳ ἔχων, πλεῖστα δὲ χρήματα ἐκ τῶν αἰχμαλώτων πεπορισμένος, δυνάσταις τε καὶ βασιλεῦσι συχνοῖς ᾠκειωμένος, τούς τε δήμους ὧν ἦρξε πάντας ὡς εἰπεῖν δι' εὐνοίας εὐεργεσίαις κεκτημένος, δυνηθείς τ' ἂν δι' αὐτῶν τήν τε Ἰταλίαν κατασχεῖν καὶ τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων κράτος πᾶν περιποιήσασθαι, τῶν μὲν πλείστων ἐθελοντὶ ἂν αὐτὸν δεξαμένων, εἰ δὲ καὶ ἀντέστησάν τινες, ἀλλ' ὑπ'ἀσθενείας γε πάντως ἂν ὁμολογησάντων, οὐκ ἠβουλήθη τοῦτο ποιῆσαι.
>
> Despite the importance of these actions, greater than any previous Roman, which could be ascribed to Fortune and to the troops who fought alongside him, the act of Pompey himself that deserves admiration forever, I will now describe. Having the greatest power by land and sea, and having amassed vast wealth from his plunder, and having won the goodwill of kings and dynasts, having assured himself of the goodwill of the people through the benefactions he provided to the people he ruled, he would have been able to take over Italy and take total control of Roman affairs, which the majority would have willingly accepted, and, if there were opponents, they would have accepted this because of their weakness, he did not want to do this.[51]

In a better world, Pompey might have been successful in maintaining his preeminence without an army. But in a world corrupted by struggles for δυναστεία, a world in which self-interest and jealousy are dominant forces, that will not be possible. Pompey is at the height of his power, and here perhaps, there is some sense that Dio perceives the tragic coloring that others perceived in writing of the end of Pompey's life as he shows him dealing with his sudden change of fortune.[52] When he dismissed his army, Pompey had failed to anticipate the obstruction that would meet some aspects of his program for the East. It is this obstruction that will drive him into the hands of Caesar. Dio points out that it was precisely the behavior of Pompey that he had praised so highly that brought him down. Without the threat of Pompey's legions, people whom he

51 This likely repeats a traditional view; see Vell. Pat. 2.40.2–3.

52 It may be significant that, in his obituary notice, Dio observes that people called Pompey "Agamemnon" (42.5.5). It is clear that this does not come from Plutarch, who attributes the comment to Domitius Ahenobarbus, who uses the comparison to undermine Pompey's position before Pharsalus (*Pomp.* 67.5).

had alienated by his high-handed conduct in the East, chiefly Lucullus and Metellus Celer (his former brother-in-law), were preventing the passage of major bills to finalize the settlement of the East and the benefits promised Pompey's veterans.[53] Thinking first that he would take his case to the people he decided against it for fear that he would fail there as well. Dio observes (37.50.6):

> καὶ ὁ μὲν οὕτω γνοὺς ὅτι μηδὲν ὄντως ἴσχυεν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ὄνομα καὶ τὸν φθόνον ἐφ' οἷς ἠδυνήθη ποτὲ εἶχεν, ἔργῳ δὲ οὐδὲν ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀπώνητο, μετεμέλετο ὅτι τά τε στρατόπεδα προαφῆκε καὶ ἑαυτὸν τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ἐξέδωκε.
>
> In this way, he did not have real power, but only a title and jealousy, to no real profit, and he regretted that he had delivered himself to his enemies, having dismissed his army.

When Pompey does join forces with Caesar, Dio comments that the only person who was not driven by personal ambition was Cato (37.57.3). Caesar, as Dio points out understood "very well that he would dominate others through his friendship with them, and then, a bit later, would control them" (37.56.1: πάνυ γὰρ εὖ ἠπίστατο ὅτι τῶν μὲν ἄλλων εὐθὺς διὰ τῆς ἐκείνων φιλίας, αὐτῶν δ' οὐ πολλῷ ὕστερον δι' ἀλλήλων κτατήσοι).[54]

The collapse of Pompey's effort to secure his settlement of the East and for his veterans sets the stage for the progressive political failure of the Republic in books 38–40. At odds are the interests of the groups Dio describes as the δυνατοί and the πλῆθος. Caesar's initial approach to his agrarian law of 59 BCE had been to unite the interests of the two, but suspicions that Caesar was seeking supreme power caused the δυνατοί to obstruct the law, even though they agreed it was reasonable. When Caesar called a public meeting to introduce the measure to the πλῆθος, Pompey was invited to speak (one of only two times in the extant books that he speaks at any length in *oratio recta*), and he is delighted to find himself treated with respect by the consul and the crowd even though he has no office himself (38.5.1–2).

From this point at which he achieves his command in Gaul, Caesar quite literally takes over the narrative. The Gallic campaigns fill large parts of books 38–40 and Caesar is allowed to present his view of the world in a grand

53 Cass. Dio 37.49.2–50.6; for questions about the validity of Dio's analysis see Rising 2013.

54 For Dio's somewhat negative view of Caesar as a consummate schemer see Welch 2019, 106–111.

speech, laden with Thucydidean echoes.[55] Pompey does not speak for himself again and to some degree appears to be subsumed within the maw of what Dio presents as dysfunctional Republican politics driven largely by Clodius. Pompey is shown, for instance, to be both the prime mover in Cicero's exile and his return.[56] Pompey's relationship with Clodius is the key element in both cases. Both Plutarch and Dio move on from Cicero's return to the arrival of Ptolemy Auletes before coming to Pompey's second consulship and it appears that Dio's opinion of Pompey remains relatively high since he points out (39.24.2) that his administration of the grain supply, made more difficult by the fact that Romans had freed a lot of slaves to take advantage of the law, was managed well both because there was ample supply and because of Pompey's wisdom.

So far Dio's account of the fifties has tracked fairly closely to the version that appears in Plutarch's *Life of Pompey* and, more briefly, the second book of Appian's *Civil Wars*. Now, in the context of the consular elections of 56 BCE, Dio deviates significantly from what we should think of as his received narrative. This should have included the conference at Lucca as a sign of the strength of the alliance between Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus. Instead, Dio says Pompey had become extremely jealous of Caesar, that he tried to prevent the consuls from reading out Caesar's accounts of the Gallic campaign in the Senate and that he is distressed to discover that great deeds are remembered only so long as there is nothing new to compare with them (39.25–26). The sudden shift of perspective to illuminate Pompey's thought processes is a technique Dio has used elsewhere to signal a significant turning point in the narrative. At 36.43.4, he discussed Pompey's thinking when he decided to "court the masses"; at 37.55, he discussed Caesar's thinking before entering into the alliance with both Pompey and Crassus; at 38.11 he described how Caesar managed anger (the turning point for Cicero's exile); and, at 41.6.1–2, he discussed Pompey's thinking in 49. Dio will return to the points he makes here in his introduction to the battle of Pharsalus (41.54.1), stating that while Caesar desired to be first, Pompey wished never to be second. These two passages stand as bookends to the breakdown in the relationship between the two men.

The issue of Pompey's jealousy was not a new one. It is something Caesar said about Pompey and was well enough known that Velleius, the Elder Seneca, Lucan and Florus all repeat it, though it is not in either Plutarch or

55 Cass. Dio 38.34–47 with Kemezis 2016.

56 Cass. Dio 39.7.2–3; see in general Lindholmer 2019a, stressing the importance of institutional dysfunction.

Appian.[57] In quoting this line, and placing it where he does, Dio is showing off his knowledge of Latin traditions about the two men, and this assertion is possibly more important than getting the facts straight, for to include Lucca at this point might have marred the clear plan that Dio is seeking to establish for the outbreak of the war.

The earlier stress on a Latin tradition about the relationship between Caesar and Pompey, and the fact that he knows of the sympathy elicited by the elephants at the opening of Pompey's theater, otherwise known outside Cicero only from the Elder Pliny, align with the detail at the end of this chapter about Demetrius, the freedman who designed the theater and who is likewise known only from Pliny and Seneca.[58] The original source for this information is now unknowable, but it was certainly part of the record in the Julio-Claudian period.

In this context Dio's handling of Julia's death in September of 54 BCE is interesting. He says her burial in the Campus Martius was a spontaneous act on the part of Pompey's friends acting with those of Caesar. His version of the cause of Julia's death (after giving birth to a daughter) does correspond with Plutarch, but Plutarch adds that the burial in the Campus Martius was the result of a mob that defied the tribunes. Dio has Domitius Ahenobarbus oppose the burial. The stress on the action of "friends" of Caesar and Pompey who act together corresponds to Dio's point at the beginning of his narrative of events leading up to the civil war that she had been the sole link that held the two men together.[59] As far as the burial goes, it is impossible to decide who has the nature of the opposition right (it may be that both are being careless and that Domitius had tried to get some tribune to prevent it from happening), but there must have been some public authorization for the tomb to be placed in the Campus Martius. Plutarch, relying on autopsy, says that her tomb was visible there in his lifetime.[60]

The first 43 chapters of book 40 are concerned with the Gallic and Parthian wars. It is only with the end of Caesar's campaign of 50 BCE that Dio returns to urban affairs, setting up the events that will lead to the outbreak of war by

57 Caes. *BCiv.* 1.4.4; Vell. Pat. 2.29.4; Sen. *Marc.* 14.3; *Ep.* 94.64–65; Luc. *Phars.* 1.125–126; Flor. 2.13.14.; see also Kemezis 2014, 118–119.

58 Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.3; Plin. *HN* 8.21 (elephants); 35.199–200; Sen. *Tranq.* 8.6 (Demetrius).

59 Cass. Dio 40.44.3 on the death of Julia's child eliminating connections between the two men; contrast Plut. *Caes.* 23.6 and *Pomp.* 53.7, making the point that Julia's death was a feature in the rupture when describing her death; see also Luc. *Phars.* 1.100–111 indicating that the view was likely one known to the Elder Seneca (see n. 4 above on the connection between Lucan and the Elder Seneca). For the date see Cic. *QFr.* 3.1.17.

60 Vell. Pat. 2.47.2; Plut. *Caes.* 23. 5–7; *Pomp.* 53.5–6; Dio 39.64.

saying that Caesar was afraid, given Julia's death, that his command was due to end, and that Pompey, who had been consul for a third time, would continue to hold his command in Spain (now extended to five years). He then backtracks to describe the chaos surrounding the consular elections of 53 BCE, in the context of which Pompey declines to take up the dictatorship, an office Dio said people feared because of their memory of Sulla.[61] There follow the murder of Clodius and Pompey's third consulship, at which point Dio is not at his most lucid. In the absence of consuls when the murder and ensuing riots occurred, Dio says that the city was in a state of ferment, with some people favoring the appointment of Pompey as dictator, and others wishing to elect Caesar consul, this group having also voted sixty days of thanksgiving to him. Then (Cass. Dio 40.50.4–5):

> Φοβηθέντες ἑκάτερον οἵ τε ἄλλοι βουλευταὶ καὶ Βίβουλος, ὅσπερ που τὴν γνώμην πρῶτος ἐρωτηθεὶς ποιήσεσθαι ἔμελλε, προκατέλαβον τὴν τοῦ πλήθους ὁρμήν, τῷ Πομπηίῳ τὴν ὑπατείαν, ὥστε μὴ δικτάτορα αὐτὸν λεχθῆναι, καὶ μόνῳ γε, ἵνα μὴ ὁ Καῖσαρ αὐτῷ συνάρξῃ, δόντες. ξένον μὲν δὴ τοῦτο καὶ ἐπὶ μηδενὸς ἄλλου γενόμενον ἔπραξαν, καὶ ὀρθῶς αὐτὸ πεποιηκέναι ἔδοξαν· ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἧττον τοῦ Καίσαρος τῷ ὁμίλῳ προσέκειτο, ἀπορρήξειν τε αὐτὸν ἀπ' ἐκείνου παντάπασι καὶ σφετεριεῖσθαι ἤλπισαν. καὶ ἔσχεν οὕτως· τῷ τε γὰρ καινῷ καὶ τῷ παραδόξῳ τῆς τιμῆς ἐπαρθεὶς οὐκέτ' οὐδὲν ἐς τὴν τῶν πολλῶν χάριν ἐβούλευσεν, ἀλλ' ἀκριβῶς πάντα τὰ τῇ βουλῇ ἀρέσκοντα ἔπραξεν
>
> Fearing both men, the other senators, especially Bibulus, who was at that time asked his opinion first, wishing to stem popular enthusiasm, gave the consulship to Pompey so that he would not be designated as dictator and so that would not be his colleague. That was a strange decision, taken with respect to no other person, but they seem to have done the right thing since Pompey was less well disposed to the mob than Caesar and they hoped the rupture between the two men would be consummated and he would become their man, and their expectation was fulfilled, for he was excited by this new and unprecedented honor, and did nothing in the interests of the people and acted consistently for the senate.

Some fair portion of this reflects Dio's interpretation of the history of the late Republic, for he has once again altered the chronology, placing all of this after

61 Cic. *Mil.* 24 indicates a long delay; Cass. Dio 40.45.1 gives seven months, App. *B Civ.* 2.19, eight months.

Caesar's campaigns of 52–50, and transitioned to domestic affairs with a look ahead to the outbreak of the civil war (40.44.1–2). Secondly, it picks up a theme that Dio had earlier enunciated, which is the breakdown in relations between the two men since the mid-fifties. Thirdly, we get another instance of Dio's technique of underscoring an important moment by trying to get inside the head of one of his subjects at an important point in the story. Dio now tells us (40.51) that Pompey did not want to exercise the office on his own; he was satisfied with the unique honor that had been done him and wished to escape the envy that would follow from it – and he was afraid that the ever-popular Caesar would be given him as a colleague. So he married the daughter of Scipio, making him consul. Then Dio describes the trials of Milo and others connected with the rioting after Clodius' assassination before going into the further legislation of the year.[62]

The basic narrative of the civil war's outbreak is straightforward – Curio prevents anything from happening in 50 BCE and embarrasses Pompey by arranging the vote in which an overwhelming majority favor requiring both Pompey and Caesar to lay down their commands. The war breaks out when the Senate reacts violently to Caesar's message of January 49 BCE; then Dio introduces a note of his own when the peace initiative of Lucius Roscius and Lucius Caesar begins. Here again, we are told (Cass. Dio 41.6.1–2):

> φοβηθεὶς οὖν διὰ ταῦθ' ὁ Πομπήιος (καὶ γὰρ εὖ ἠπίστατο ὅτι πολὺ τοῦ Καίσαρος, ἄν γε ἐπὶ τῷ δήμῳ γένωνται, ἐλαττωθήσεται) αὐτός τε ἐς Καμπανίαν πρὶν τοὺς πρέσβεις ἐπανελθεῖν, ὡς καὶ ῥᾷον ἐκεῖ πολεμήσων, προαπῆρε, καὶ τὴν βουλὴν ἅπασαν μετὰ τῶν τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐχόντων ἀκολουθῆσαί οἱ ἐκέλευσεν, ἄδειάν τέ σφισι δόγματι τῆς ἐκδημίας δούς, καὶ προειπὼν ὅτι τὸν ὑπομείναντα ἔν τε τῷ ἴσῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ ὁμοίῳ τοῖς τὰ ἐναντία σφίσι πράττουσιν ἔξοι
>
> Pompey was afraid of this [a demand from Caesar that both men lay down their commands] for he was very aware that if the matter were placed before the people, he would be easily defeated by Caesar, so he set out for Campania before the ambassadors could return, thinking that he could fight the war more easily from there, and he told the magistrates and the whole senate to follow him; he gave these people permission to leave by

62 Cass. Dio 40.54–55 (trials); 40.56–58 (legislation on consular elections and the censorship); note especially 40.56.2 on the emendation of the electoral law with respect to Caesar's right to stand for the consulship in absence (also, Suet. *Iul.* 28.3). For the law of the ten tribunes granting Caesar the *ratio absentis* at the time Pompey accepted the sole consulship see Dio 40.51.2 and Caes. *BCiv.* 1.32.3; Suet. *Iul.* 26.2.

> an edict and announced that anyone remaining would be treated in the same way as those fighting him.[63]

For Dio it is clear that Pompey is now in the wrong: The withdrawal from Rome is a shambles; Pompey is responsible for Domitius' debacle at Corfinium (Dio says he abandoned him) and when he leaves Italy (41.13.1, 4):

> Πομπήιος μὲν οὖν τήν τε πατρίδα καὶ τὴν ἄλλην Ἰταλίαν οὕτως ἐξέλιπε πάντα τὰ ἐναντιώτατα τοῖς πρόσθεν, ὅτε ἐς αὐτὴν ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας κατέπλευσε, καὶ ἑλόμενος καὶ πράξας· ἀφ' ὧνπερ καὶ τὴν τύχην καὶ τὴν δόξαν ἀντίπαλον ἐκτήσατο [...] καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ἀντὶ μὲν τῆς λαμπρότητος ἣν ἐκ τῶν πολέμων ἐκείνων κτησάμενος ἀφίκετο, ταπεινότητα πρὸς τὸν παρὰ τοῦ Καίσαρος φόβον ἀντιλαβὼν ἀπῆρεν, ἀντὶ δὲ τῆς εὐκλείας ἣν ἐκ τοῦ τὴν πατρίδα αὐξῆσαι ἔσχεν, δυσκλεέστατος ἐπὶ τῇ τότε ἐκλείψει αὐτῆς ἐγένετο
>
> Thus did Pompey leave his homeland and all Italy, doing all things in the opposite way as he had done before when he sailed to Italy from Asia, and the fortune and reputation he took with him were also the opposite. [...] In place of the outstanding glory that had marked his return from earlier campaigns, he departed with the opposite because of his fear of Caesar and, in place of the glory he had acquired for expanding the state, he had the greatest dishonor for abandoning it.

For Dio, Caesar and Pompey are not so different; in the introduction to the battle of Pharsalus, he stresses that as men they were more alike than unalike.[64] The battle itself is unlike any other, for Philippi marked the end of the Republic and Actium, the beginning of the monarchy. Pharsalus, though, was a contest between the two greatest Romans of their time. But the result would not bring about a change in government: The government Caesar established had a precedent in that of Sulla, for it was the Republic run by a dictator.[65]

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63 For the date of the edict declaring those who remained in Italy to be Pompey's enemies see Cic. Att. 11.6.6 (November); Appian *BC* 2.37.1 shares the erroneous date; for the constitutional questions raised here see the discussion in Freyburger-Galland, Hinard & Cordier 2002, 52 n.2. Caes. *BCiv.* 1.14.1–2 states that money was distributed from the aerarium according to a *senatus consultum* and that magistrates subsequently followed Pompey out of the city when rumor arrived that Caesar was approaching the city. Caesar notably does not connect the departure from the city with the embassy of Roscius and Caesar, which suggests that this was a later addition in a tradition that painted a more negative picture of Pompey's manipulation of the political process in 49 BCE.

64 Cass. Dio 56.38.4.

65 Cass. Dio 47.39.1–3; for the difficulties with this passage, see also Manuwald (1979): 15–21.

Caesar was victorious, and Pompey seems a tragic figure, overwhelmed by Fortune. He had no plan for what to do if he had lost (Dio denies he ever intended to go to Parthia) and he meets his fate with equanimity.[66] He had destroyed himself through his alliance with Caesar. This view is well-attested at the time. Caelius says so even before the war broke out, and Cicero claims, in retrospect that he had made the same point.[67] The notion that Pompey had been drawn away from his earlier friendship with Caesar through the machinations of Caesar's enemies had been promulgated by Caesar himself before the end of 49.[68]

Although he adopted a well-attested version of Pompey's career, Dio entered a few variations on the theme by his handling of 56 BCE and shifted it into his broader theme of the movement from δημοκρατία through δυναστεία to μοναρχία, and in doing so, coincidentally reveals the strength of his command of the Latin tradition. This is important because his readers are not wrapped up in the immediate impact of the events: Both Caesar and Pompey mean something different in 200 CE than they did in 40 BCE. Marcus Aurelius, when he lists great generals, will offer, more than once, the examples of Alexander, Caesar and Pompey.[69] Since Caesar did not establish the monarchy, Pompey could not be seen as having opposed it. The Pompey who loses sight of his better self, subordinates himself to Caesar and then repents of his decision through jealousy is more tragic than evil. As a man who helped make the empire, who was more responsible than any other for shaping its eastern provinces, he is a person to be monumentalized and remembered by the rulers of the world.

Pompey also offers an object lesson for Dio's contemporaries. He lost to Caesar because he was less ruthless. His voluntary surrender of power in 62 BCE was the proximate cause of his own demise. But does that mean that utter ruthlessness is the key to power? Caesar too lacked Sulla's penchant for bloodshed. But it is not only at Sulla that Dio wishes his readers to look. Sulla was paired with Marius as an exemplar for severity, and Marius also failed. Sulla was not a precursor for later emperors in Xiphilinus' reading of Dio. Pompey and Caesar were. Where Augustus differed from both of them is in his willingness to participate in the bloodshed of the proscriptions, but also in his move away from such conduct. Hence the long dialogue with Livia with respect to

66 Cass. Dio 42.2.5–6 denying that he would go to Parthia; 42.4.4 (death).

67 Cic. *Fam.* 8.14.2 (Caelius in August of 50); *Att.* 7.3.4 (December of 50); 8.3.3 (February of 49); *Fam.* 7.3 (August 46); 6.6 (October 46); *Phil* 2. 23–4. See also Hor. *Carm.* 2.1 (= Asinius Pollio T1 in Cornell 2013, with Drummond's discussion in Cornell 2013, 1.437–438).

68 Caes. *BCiv.* 1.4.4; 1.7.1.

69 M. Aur. *Med.* 3.3.1; 8.3.1.

the alleged conspiracy of Cinna, a story that Dio may have found in a Latin source and made his own here.[70] The point is that Augustus endeared himself to his subjects through his inclination towards kindness, his earlier harsh acts having been compelled by circumstance. So, too, Tiberius praised Augustus for his move away from severity to mildness, and Dio appears to have rewritten Tacitus' negative judgement of Augustus to stress the importance of mixing brutality with mercy; his speakers stress the fact that Augustus was only harsh when compelled by circumstance.[71] That was the key to lasting power.

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70 Cass. Dio 55.14.1–22.2 with Rich 1989, 103 noting that it is uncertain if the version of the story in Sen. *Clem.* 1.9 is Dio's direct source, but see also Millar 1964, 78.

71 Cass. Dio 56.37–38 reiterating points made at 52.2.4–5.

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CHAPTER 2

"Safety First": Cassius Dio on the Augustan Senate

Jonathan Scott Perry

My title is derived from the electoral slogan regularly employed by Stanley Baldwin, British Prime Minister in three periods: 1923–1924, 1924–1929 (losing both times to a Labour government headed by Ramsay MacDonald), and again 1935–1937. In his final stint in office, Baldwin weathered both the Abdication Crisis and strident calls for "Appeasement" to Hitler's Germany, only to be replaced by Neville Chamberlain. The "Safety First" mantra reflected a vaunted trust in Baldwin's personal integrity and calm management of labor issues, virtues which, he believed, could be extended to matters of foreign policy. However, when the motto is referenced today, it is generally held up to mockery, and one might compare the contemporaneous "Hoovervilles" in the United States: homeless camps erected by desperate people in the early years of the Great Depression and so named to express frustration with President Hoover. Nonetheless, perhaps one should delve more deeply and ask whether a policy of "safety" does have merit in and of itself. Along that line of questioning, we might wonder *from what danger* safety is desired, and *for whom*, since safety for some might result in peril for others.

Drawing on these various concepts of "safety", this article explores Cassius Dio's account of Augustus' efforts to curb senatorial absenteeism, particularly as enumerated in a *Lex Julia de senatu habendo* passed in 9 BCE. In keeping with the themes of this volume, it will demonstrate how Dio's experiences within the long second century, specifically as a member of the Senate in a turbulent time of civil war, shaped his views of the codification of senatorial procedure under Augustus. Specifically, by comparing two instances in which Dio points out the "safer" course, once for the Senators – including the eyewitness Dio himself – and a second time for Septimius Severus in respect *to* the senators, we may come to appreciate the subtlety of Dio's attitude regarding the proper role of a Senate vis-à-vis a newly installed, triumphant emperor. While these episodes demonstrate how Dio's own time period shaped his vision of the past, they may also give us new insight into the nature of the Augustan regime itself, one for which Dio remains a crucial source. By way of an allusion to Augustus, which Severus reportedly made in a speech delivered to the senators in assembly, I hope to demonstrate Dio's usefulness in interpreting the attitude of senators in the first Principate. Choosing to stay away

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from senatorial meetings, these nobles – Dio's own counterparts in a previous era – were actually engaged in a deliberate strategy of resistance.

One of the most remarkable elements of Dio's commentary on the Julian law of 9 BCE is his claim that some of its precise stipulations were still observed in his own lifetime. In both *The Senate of Imperial Rome* and a 1984 article, "Augustus and the Senate", Richard Talbert observed, "our knowledge of this vital statute is very patchy."[1] Nevertheless, as Dio is the main source for the law (together with a few vague references in Gellius and Pliny the Younger[2]), it is appropriate to weigh his extensive exposition of the measure here. The full passage (55.3.1–4) reads:[3]

> ὁ δ᾽ Αὔγουστος τάς τε τῆς γερουσίας ἕδρας ἐν ῥηταῖς ἡμέραις γίγνεσθαι ἐκέλευσεν (ἐπειδὴ γὰρ οὐδὲν πρότερον ἀκριβῶς περὶ αὐτῶν ἐτέτακτο καί τινες διὰ τοῦτο πολλάκις ὑστέριζον, δύο βουλὰς κατὰ μῆνα κυρίας ἀπέδειξεν, ὥστε ἐς αὐτὰς ἐπάναγκες, οὕς γε καὶ ὁ νόμος ἐκάλει, συμφοιτᾶν· καὶ ὅπως γε μηδ᾽ ἄλλη μηδεμία σκῆψις τῆς ἀπουσίας αὐτοῖς ὑπάρχῃ, προσέταξε μήτε δικαστήριον μήτ᾽ ἄλλο μηδὲν τῶν προσηκόντων σφίσιν ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ γίγνεσθαι), τόν τε ἀριθμὸν τὸν ἐς τὴν κύρωσιν τῶν δογμάτων ἀναγκαῖον καθ᾽ ἕκαστον εἶδος αὐτῶν, ὥς γε ἐν κεφαλαίοις εἰπεῖν, διενομοθέτησε, καὶ τὰ ζημιώματα τοῖς μὴ δι᾽ εὔλογόν τινα αἰτίαν τῆς συνεδρείας ἀπολειπομένοις ἐπηύξησεν. ἐπειδή τε πολλὰ τῶν τοιούτων ὑπὸ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν ὑπευθύνων ἀτιμώρητα εἴωθε γίγνεσθαι, κληροῦσθαί τε αὐτοὺς εἰ συχνοὶ τοῦτο ποιήσειαν, καὶ τὸν ἀεὶ πέμπτον λαχόντα ὀφλισκάνειν αὐτὰ ἐκέλευσε. τά τε ὀνόματα συμπάντων τῶν βουλευόντων ἐς λεύκωμα ἀναγράψας ἐξέθηκε· καὶ ἐξ ἐκείνου καὶ νῦν κατ᾽ ἔτος τοῦτο ποιεῖται.
>
> Augustus ordered that sessions of the Senate should be held on specified days. It seems that in the past there had been no precise ordinance on this matter, and for this reason, some members often failed to attend. Accordingly, Augustus appointed two regular meetings in each month [i.e., the Ides and Kalends, except for the Ides of March], at which attendance was mandatory, at least for those who had been summoned by law, and to ensure that they might have no other pretext for absence, he

1 Talbert 1984a, 57. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of all three editors, as well as the outside readers, over many stages of revision. Collectively and individually, they have suggested new lines of inquiry, shared with me a great deal of recently published scholarship, and, most of all, encouraged me to clarify and hone this paper's argumentation. Any remaining errors are, of course, completely my own.

2 Gell., *N.A.* 4.10.1, and Plin., *Ep.* 5.13.5–7 & 8.14.19, described in Talbert 1984b, 222–223.

3 Greek texts are taken from Cary's 1917 edition in the Loeb Library, and the translations are my own.

> directed that no court or other institution which required their presence should sit at that time. He also fixed by law the number of senators necessary for the passage of decrees, according to their several kinds – to state only the chief points of the matter – and he increased the fines on those who had absented themselves from a session without a good excuse. Many lapses of this kind had customarily gone unpunished on account of the large numbers of the offenders, and so he directed that if there were many defaulters, they should draw lots and that one out of five, as the lot fell, should pay the fine. He had the names of all the senators entered on an album and posted; and this practice, originating with him, is still observed each year.

Dio concludes with a lengthy discussion of the degrees of force (or *auctoritas*, which he says is impossible to render in Greek[4]) a measure would have, depending on the size of the membership who had passed it. Accordingly, the law would essentially have established the *quora* necessary for the enactment of certain measures.

Talbert provided extensive analysis of the passage in the form of a targeted article and within the scope of his landmark book, both published in 1984. The article examines the various means by which Augustus attempted to shape the composition and behavior of the Senate, but it suggests that, while these measures may have appeared invasive and authoritarian, Augustus was actually making a series of "experiments" motivated by an "antiquarian" "sense of order" and "respect" – even though the results were sometimes "tactless" and "clumsy". Beginning with Octavian's review of the senatorial rolls in 29–28 BCE and his subsequent re-revision in 18 BCE, Talbert emphasizes the inability of Augustus to effect sweeping change as well as the surprising strength of resistance to his efforts to forge a new senatorial class. Recalcitrant senators likely displayed mere "acquiescence rather than full-hearted support," and Talbert considers the measures of 18, 11, and 9 BCE (the precise dates and results of which are a bit garbled in both Dio and Suetonius) as bellwethers of the "generally low" level of morale among senators by this point in the Principate.[5]

Against a backdrop of dwindling interest and investment in the regime, Talbert cautions against reading Augustus' measures as undue interference by the *princeps* into the mechanisms of senatorial assembly and procedure. In

4 Comparing several Greek authors of the Roman period, Mason (1970, 159) concluded that this reticence resulted from "a literary fashion that considered long familiar Roman expressions as 'difficult to translate' (difficult, that is, without offending literary sensibilities)".

5 Talbert 1984a, 57.

this light, the formal abolition of the quorum requirement (of 400 members) in 11 BCE appears to be a mere acknowledgement that the quorum had, already and for a long time, been ignored in practice. Moreover, especially after the sharp reduction of senators' numbers in the culling of 18 BCE – from roughly 800 to "no more than 600 or so" – the attainment of a quorum of 400 would have seemed an increasingly tall order.[6] The revisiting of the issue of absenteeism only two years after this concession thus demonstrates Augustus' understandable frustration with the problem rather than a domineering attitude to government. Even though "[f]ines for absenteeism were stiffened up … these seem to have proved as unsuccessful as ever in goading laggards: it would look as if Augustus quietly let them be forgotten, and no later emperor was tactless enough to revive them."[7] Talbert went on to connect the establishment of set days for senatorial meetings in this *Lex Julia* with the senators' own tendency toward non-participation: By stipulating the days on which members could expect a meeting, Augustus hoped to forestall lazy members' pleading "another engagement as an excuse for absence then." In addition, and also as a result of the law of 9 BCE, the names of all the senators who were eligible to attend were displayed publicly on a board. Based on Dio's arrangement of these elements, this may have been a means of shaming those who had chosen not to attend a session. This particular measure seems to have succeeded in its aim – or at least was deemed efficacious – as the practice was continued for centuries afterward.

Talbert argues that Augustus' legislation concerning the Senate was, thus, the result of a trial-and-error approach rather than a rigidly coordinated and deliberately implemented policy. Given a grab-bag of measures, some succeeded, some failed miserably, and others were broached and then quietly dropped when they were deemed to be overreaching or discovered to be too difficult to enforce. This characterization of Augustus as a well-intentioned, if occasionally misguided, reformer is incorporated into the main text of *The Senate of Imperial Rome* at several points.[8] Talbert's soundings of Augustus' intentions for the Senate were echoed, also in 1984, in Brunt's article "The Role of the Senate in the Augustan Regime." In Brunt's estimation, it is at least "a plausible conjecture" that Augustus actually *did* encourage wide-ranging discussions and sincerely "hoped to ascertain the true sentiments of senators" in his deliberations with them.[9] Similarly, in a monograph on the

6 Talbert 1984b, 137.
7 Talbert 1984a, 58.
8 Talbert 1984b, 138–139, 222, 488.
9 Brunt 1984, 443–444.

Republican Senate (1989) and in an article on the Julio-Claudian Senate (1995), Bonnefond-Coudry endorsed and even seemed to strengthen Talbert's view of Augustan deference to traditional senatorial prerogatives. In her estimation, it was "the constant care of Augustus to favor the free exercise of senatorial initiative," and "he chose to preserve the traditional system of decision-making" wherever possible.[10] Realizing his potential to sway the direction and thereby negate the salutary effect of senatorial debate, the *princeps* made strenuous efforts "to guarantee the senators' freedom of expression" and thereby to avoid alienating the body.[11] Moreover, she argued, the fact that the Senate rapidly lost its standing should not lead one "to attribute systematically to Augustus a project of underhanded diminution of its role" (*un projet de restriction sournoise de son rôle*).[12] Instead, the characteristically "ambiguous" nature of Augustus' relationship with the senators left his successors in a difficult position, and Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero each pursued a policy that they thought better suited themselves and their interests.[13]

The tendency of most scholarship, therefore, has been to focus on Augustus' goals and attitudes toward the Senate, as reflected in his actions and legislation. But what of the attitudes of the senators themselves? Having survived a civil war and with no great assurance that another would not break out again – especially given the oftentimes precarious health of Octavian/Augustus and his unclear succession plan – the senators might have been anxious, but also cautiously expectant of a reconfiguration of their position in the balance of power. Over two centuries later, Cassius Dio himself experienced a similar period of rapid change and ambiguity, a period that Martin Hose characterized as an "age of anxiety", especially for the senatorial class in Rome.[14]

As underscored in several papers in a recent collection on Dio's analysis of violence and civil war, Dio was, as Osgood comments, "a Senator living in Rome in the 190s, and he probably was busily finishing up in the late 190s his first major work of history, an account of the civil wars that seemingly were now at an end.... It was inevitable that they [i.e., his experiences during this period] would shape how he researched and wrote not just about this war, but earlier civil wars."[15] Kemezis goes even further in cementing the effects of civil war into a collective "senatorial memory" in the 190s, pointing out the paralyzing effect of not only living through the period but being, to all appearances,

10 Bonnefond-Coudry 1989, 792.
11 Bonnefond-Coudry 1989, 741.
12 Bonnefond-Coudry 1989, 259.
13 Bonnefond-Coudry 1995, 232.
14 Hose 2007, especially 446.
15 Osgood 2020, 315.

powerless to shape its course.[16] While he cautions against concluding that there was a "single 'senatorial experience'", Kemezis emphasizes the collective "sense of terror", "prospective fear", and "the fearful anticipation of punishment" on the part of Dio and his fellow senators, which was normally couched in the first-person plural.[17] This concern, as he astutely observes, was principally a preoccupation with "what they have to lose, though there seems little they can do to avoid losing it".[18] Nevertheless, it is important to note, as Molin comments, that Dio's principal concern was specifically with the standing and relative strength of the institutional Senate itself.[19] This sense of priority may even have led to Dio's text being, as Rantala attractively argues, "a statement from the senatorial point of view, or even as a form of senatorial resistance against Severus and his policy."[20]

Accordingly, the process of posting the names of all senators – both the attendees and the absentees – may have been of more than antiquarian interest to Dio, especially during the early years of his own senatorial experience. Reflecting on his own fears for his personal safety under the new regime of Didius Julianus in 193, he comments that, despite the favors he had been shown by Pertinax, "nevertheless, we made our appearance, partly for this reason (since it did not seem to us to be safe to remain at home, for fear such a course might in itself arouse suspicion)" (Cass. Dio. 74[73].12.3: ὅμως δ'οὖν καὶ διὰ ταῦτα [οὐ γὰρ ἐδόκει ἡμῖν ἀσφαλὲς εἶναι οἴκοι, μὴ καὶ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τούτου ὑποπτευθῶμεν, καταμεῖναι] προήλθομεν). Dio thus captures the collective mood, as Markov notes, describing "how they [i.e., the senators] were possessed by fear and trembled when the news reached them."[21] But the senators' *actions* are telling here. While they did ultimately "pay respects to the emperor", Dio comments that, at the time, they considered it the *safer* course of action to attend rather than to stay home. Later on, Dio attempted, as a cautious man, to "lie low", as Osgood remarks, but it is important to observe that staying home would also have been a perilous policy at certain points in the decade.

Nonetheless, there is at least one other appearance of the word "safe", in connection with an *emperor's* goals, rather than those of the senators. While Septimius Severus initially "tried to show a more conciliatory attitude towards the Senate", according to Rantala, the civil war against Clodius Albinus in 197 caused him to change his attitude – as well as his hands-off policy with respect

16 Kemezis 2020, *passim*; cf. Osgood 2020, 287.
17 Kemezis 2020, 261, 268, 267.
18 Kemezis 2020, 266.
19 Molin 2016, 473.
20 Rantala 2016, 161.
21 Markov 2020, 251.

to the senators' lives.[22] The *Historia Augusta's* claim that 41 senators were put to death may be dubious,[23] but a speech by Severus, in the Senate-house itself, suggests that "senatorial resistance towards Severus did not die."[24] According to Dio's recollection, Severus now came to re-evaluate the prudence of violent action, as "he praised the severity and cruelty of Sulla, Marius, and Augustus as the safer course and rejected the clemency of Pompey and Caesar for having proved the ruin of those men" (Cass. Dio 76[75].8.1: καὶ τὴν μὲν Σύλλου καὶ Μαρίου καὶ Αὐγούστου αὐστηρίαν τε καὶ ὠμότητα ὡς ἀσφαλεστέραν ἐπαινῶν, τὴν δὲ Πομπηίου καὶ Καίσαρος ἐπιείκειαν ὡς ὀλεθρίαν αὐτοῖς ἐκείνοις γεγενημένην κακίζων). At least two questions arise from this passage: Why was cruelty to the senators, as well as Severus' informing them of his intentions out loud, "safer" than Caesar's famous clemency, and why was Augustus, specifically, placed alongside Marius and Sulla?

Although Dio's coverage of Marius and Sulla has survived only in fragmentary form, a close reading of those fragments suggests what he might have had in mind with this full comparison. Dio's Sulla has been described by Urso as an "*exemplum* of cruelty,"[25] but his placement alongside Augustus here may be suggesting that, at least in the mind of the triumphant emperor Severus, a swift and showy act of violence, specifically *directed at* the Senate, would preclude more significant problems down the road. Fragment 109 (4–5) details Sulla's massacre of prisoners from the Social War and even the sound effects he engineered for the senators on this occasion. Having sent the heads of Damasippus and his followers ahead to Praeneste[26] to be stuck on poles, he killed some prisoners and dragged others to the Temple of Bellona, ordering the senators to meet him there. While making a "very bitter speech" to the senators, Sulla ordered that the prisoners be slaughtered, and the victims' piteous cries penetrated into the senators' assembly. The effect is described in a (quite remarkable) detail (Fragment 109.6):

22 Rantala 2016, 163–165.

23 See Alföldy 1970 for a prosopographic analysis of the names, but with the cautions of Jacques 1992. Letta 2014, including exiled and otherwise "marginalized" ("*emarginati*") senators, sets the figure rather higher, at 111 victims. Assuming roughly 600 members in the full Senate at the time, this would yield a casualty rate of 18.5% (Letta 2014, 138).

24 Rantala 2016, 167.

25 Urso 2016. Berdowski 2020 has recently argued that Dio is equating constitutional violence in the context of civil war to Sulla's pre-existing disposition toward cruelty manifesting itself once given the opportunity.

26 Lange 2020, 212 shrewdly connects the concept of "selective violence" in this case to the murder of Pescennius Niger at the beginning of Severus' reign (75[74].8.1–3). Here too, the head was cut off, placed on a pole, and sent to Byzantium "in order to convince the locals to join Severus".

> ὥστε τὴν γερουσίαν ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐκταράττεσθαι. καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ πόρρω ἔτι τοῦ τι καὶ αὐτοὶ δεινὸν πείσεσθαι προσδοκᾶν ἦσαν, οὕτως ἀνόσια αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγοντος ἅμα καὶ πράττοντος.
>
> Thus the senators were terrified on two sides, for they had now come to the point of expecting that they themselves would suffer a similar fate, so irreligious were both his words and his deeds.

While Berdowski observes that Sulla "is often paired with Marius," sometimes "artificially",[27] the order of the names in Severus' comment may strike one as odd. Does it refer to the marches on Rome by Sulla and then by Marius, or to the massacres of opponents that followed upon those marches? If the latter, would it not make more chronological sense for Marius to be named *first*, and then Sulla, with his famous proscription lists later in the 80s BCE, to be named afterward? In any event, the obvious point of comparison between Sulla and Augustus would be the proscriptions, at least during the period when Augustus was known as Octavian. Nonetheless, Severus' invocation of Sulla's precedent may have been crafted to strike further terror into the hearts of senators in particular. Drawing on the same fragment of Dio (109.12–20), Lange incisively observes that there was "a logic to the violence" of Sulla's actions, especially with respect to the hidden terror it generated.[28] Interestingly, the concept of "safety" is also invoked at the conclusion of Dio's extended analysis of the psychological effects of proscription, though in a negative sense. "No safety" (109.10: ἀσφάλεια οὐδεμία, with forms of word "safe" repeated at 109.13 and 109.15) was afforded anyone who was targeted by any of Sulla's henchmen (and here Dio may be thinking of Chrysogonus' surreptitious addition of names to the lists).

Lange also makes the crucial observation that the same "whitened tablets" listing names reappeared in the proscriptions that solidified the Second Triumvirate. Dio comments that all the Sullan tactics were resurrected, "except that only two white tablets were posted, one for the senators and one for the rest" (47.3.2: πλὴν ὅτι δύο μόνα λευκώματα, χωρὶς μὲν τῶν βουλευτῶν). Lange suggests that this may be "the invention of Dio, the senator,"[29] but it may be significant that "a whitened tablet" was also used to record eligible senators' names up until Dio's own time. Perhaps the album of senators could serve as a "reverse proscription list" of sorts, in which those who were in attendance stood in good

27 Berdowski 2020, 23.

28 Lange 2020, 195, 204–205.

29 Lange 2020, 206.

favor with the dictator/emperor and those who absented themselves risked offending him on pain of death.

The proscriptions may have been a common element between Sulla and Octavian/Augustus, but, oddly, judging from his character sketches by other sources, the remembered Augustus appears to be more horrified than gratified by gratuitous cruelty. For one example, he is disgusted by Vedius Pollio, the freedman who fed his slaves to moray eels (in a story also told by Seneca the Younger and Pliny the Elder[30]). There is, of course, the familiar story of Octavian's physical violence – though this is told by Suetonius, and not by Dio:[31]

> *et Quintum Gallium praetorem, in officio salutationis tabellas duplices veste tectas tenentem, suspicatus gladium occulere nec quicquam statim, ne aliud inveniretur, ausus inquirere, paulo post per centuriones et milites raptum e tribunali servilem in modum torsit ac fatentem nihil iussit occidi, prius oculis eius sua manu effossis.*
>
> And when Quintus Gallius, a praetor, held some folded tablets under his robe as he was paying his respects, Augustus, suspecting that he had a sword concealed there, did not dare to make a search on the spot for fear it should turn out to be something else; but a little later he had Gallius hustled from the tribunal by some centurions and soldiers, tortured him as if he were a slave, and, though the man confessed nothing, ordered his execution, first tearing out the man's eyes with his own hand.

The most famous example of Octavian/Augustus' personal cruelty in Dio's narrative is the human sacrifice of 300 equites and "many" senators after the siege of Perusia in 41–40 BCE (48.14), but I would suggest that the passage echoes Sulla's savagery in the particular intersection of religious outrage (against Bellona in the Sullan case and Juno in the Augustan) and violence *against senators*. I would, however, disagree with Madsen's overall characterization of this episode (i.e., that Dio uses the story to demonstrate "that civil war makes even the most righteous men commit atrocities"[32]). Appian's alternative account of reprisals against the Perusines, together with the vague report in Seneca and the more sanguinary one in Suetonius,[33] may have resulted, as Syme argued,

30 Dio 54.23.2; Sen. *Clem.* 1.18.2; Plin. *HN* 9.39.

31 Suet. *Aug.* 27.4 (text and translation are drawn from Rolfe's edition in the Loeb Classical Library [1914]). For an astute contrast of Suetonius' admissions of Augustus' cruelty in the Triumviral period with the "almost blameless" Julius Caesar, see Wardle 2019, 404.

32 Madsen 2020, 107–110 (quotation on p. 110), and Madsen 2019, 490–491.

33 App. *B. Civ.* 5.49; Sen. *De clem.* 1.11.1; Suet. *Aug.* 15.1.

from a process by which these "judicial murders were magnified by defamation and credulity."[34] On the other hand, Dio intimates that the claim of over three hundred men being sacrificed on an altar was untrustworthy, introducing the narrative with "the story goes that …" (48.14.4: καὶ λόγος γε ἔχει ὅτι).[35] If the story is to be credited at all, Dio suggests, the men did not suffer death "in the ordinary way", since they were ritually slaughtered, and he concludes the passage with a strange story: Octavian was warned in a dream to save a statue of Juno in Perusia and to transport it to Rome.[36]

Therefore, the religious connections of both episodes of cruelty – as well as the targeting of senators (plus the chilling effect on them that this cruelty would reasonably produce) – may have factored into the behavior of Severus' models for the creation of "safety". In a sophisticated analysis of Octavian's triumviral career as reflected in Cassius Dio, Markov establishes the fact that "Dio doesn't make any distinction between Octavian before and after coming to supreme power." Although he was "not by nature cruel" (47.7.2: τῇ τε γὰρ φύσει οὐκ ὠμὸς ἦν), Octavian was willing to commit ruthless acts when these were "practical" – and even more readily when he could be "seen" to be merciful, despite the reality of things.[37] While Severus may have drawn inspiration from Augustus' example, as Cooley and Barnes have persuasively demonstrated,[38] there may have been a specific message to the senatorial class in Severus' targeted cruelty. In his article "Septimius Severus und der Senat", Alföldy drew attention to Severus' goal, after a period of civil war, to drive the senators "into cooperation [*Mitarbeit*] in the interest of the state," like "Augustus had with their ancestors."[39] As in the aftermath of other periods of civil war, the *appearance* of unity and shared effort, even if there were silent murders in the background, was all-important.[40] Moreover, in Dio's eyes, incidental, short-lived cruelty would soon be forgiven and forgotten in the interest of civil peace. As Rantala points out, Dio considered that "the monarchy created by Augustus was an ideal form of government, and if Octavian occasionally behaved badly while creating the system, it was something to be forgiven."[41] Excessive cruelty

34 Syme 1939, 212.

35 Given this hesitancy on Dio's part, Lange 2019, 196 notes that the historian "did not wholeheartedly commit to the story of the three hundred murdered knights and senators."

36 This incident may have been intended to echo Camillus' transferal of Juno Regina from Veii to Rome, but the story does not appear in the fragments of Dio (from Books 6 and 7) that have survived.

37 Markov 2019, 284, 289, 290–291.

38 Cooley 2007; Barnes 2008.

39 Alföldy 1968, 132.

40 See Osgood 2020, 317 (on Julius Caesar) and Scott 2020, 345 (on Vespasian).

41 Rantala 2016, 172.

by Severus may, in Dio's ambiguous portrait of the man, have been a different matter.

But perhaps the sword can cut both ways, as seen in the appearance of Severus' 600 hand-selected bodyguards, who did not put off their θώρακας until they had reached Rome (74[73].15.3). In a detail offered by the *Historia Augusta*, rather than by Dio, Severus (again, as Sulla had) seized the senators' meeting place and stationed armed guards around it. Dio's "somewhat happier picture of the same event," in Rantala's phrase, with bright lights and garlands accompanying Severus' entry to the city, is likely to be less reliable even than the *HA*.[42] Given Severus' later advice to his sons to maintain the soldiers' loyalty, it is not difficult to imagine why he feared that weapons, and not flowers, would have been strewn in his path. On at least one famous occasion, of course, the senators had proven a lethal force – against a dictator whom they caught off-guard.

Accordingly, what if the *real* danger, as Dio's telling of this last episode suggests, was to the *emperor* and not to the senators? Severus prepared against possible resistance by taking swift and brutal action rather than forgiving former enemies, but he also wanted his soldiers to be physically protected in the presence of senators. In this aspect, we might compare Octavian/Augustus' concern for his own personal, *bodily* safety, vis-à-vis the senators when they had been assembled *en masse*. Borrowing from a recent play title, I would offer *The Curious Incident of Augustus' Breastplate*. In his narrative of 19 BCE, Dio notes in an aside, "as for the breastplate which he often wore beneath his stola, even when he entered the Senate, he believed it would be of little or meager help to him" (54.12.3: βραχὺ γάρ τι καὶ σμικρὸν τὸν θώρακα, ὃν ὑπὸ τῇ στολῇ πολλάκις καὶ ἐς αὐτὸ τὸ συνέδριον ἐσιὼν εἶχεν, ἐπικουρήσειν οἱ ἐνόμιζε). But there is at least one other view of this famous breastplate, worn in the specific context of a culling of the Senators, as reported by Suetonius (*Aug.* 35.1):[43]

> *Senatorum affluentem numerum deformi et incondita turba … ad modum pristinum et splendorem redegit duabus lectionibus: prima ipsorum arbitratu, quo vir virum legit, secunda suo et Agrippae; quo tempore existimatur lorica sub veste munitus ferroque cinctus praesedisse decem valentissimis senatorii ordinis amicis sellam suam circumstantibus.*

42 Rantala 2016, who suggests that the original version of the passage was presented to Severus "in a more or less flattering manner, and was only later included in his *Roman History*, a work which includes severe criticism against Severus" (160).

43 It is generally accepted that Suetonius has mistakenly transferred the breastplate incident from its correct context, the *lectio senatus* of 18 BCE, to the earlier culling of senators in 29–28 (see, *inter alia*, Wardle 2014, 280–281).

> With the number of senators swelled to a disordered and undignified rabble … Augustus returned it to its former size and glory by means of two reviews, the first conducted by the senators themselves in which each man chose one another [as members], the second by himself and Agrippa. It was on this occasion that he is believed to have presided protected by a breastplate under his tunic and wearing a sword at his side, with ten strong men, friends from the senatorial order, standing around his seat.

There may, in fact, have been a precedent for this practice, originating in the Triumviral days – although Cicero's ostentatious display of a breastplate in the election of 63 BCE may have been a more complicated model. According to Dio, at 50.2.5 (32 BCE), Octavian would convene the Senate while surrounded by soldiers and friends carrying concealed daggers.

It is possible that Augustus' fears for his personal safety *lessened* over time. Dio notes that, toward the end of his life, the *princeps* stopped appearing at every meeting and at every trial. He was, so it appears, increasingly reluctant to annoy senators as he aged – despite taking on new titles "under protest" (55.12.2–3). This "policy" may be reflected in Livia's fictional advice, also offered in Book 55, and it draws on the same justification that Maecenas had advanced in their earlier colloquy (50.5.2).[44] Urging her husband to prefer the gentler to the harsher word, and to practice clemency – even against real threats – she avers, "For no one finds it easy to believe that a ruler who holds such great authority and power can be the object of plotting on the part of some individual, unarmed person" (55.18.5: οὐδεὶς γὰρ ῥᾳδίως πιστεύει ὅτι τις ἔν τε ἐξουσίᾳ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει τοσαύτῃ ὢν ὑπ᾽ ἰδιώτου τινὸς ἀόπλου ἐπιβουλευθῆναι δύναται). Shortly after this discussion, Augustus implements Livia's advice, speaking last during the session, so that the senators might form their own opinion first.[45] He also, apparently, gradually allowed them to make judgments while he absented himself from their meetings (55.34.1–2). However, the "unarmed"/"armed" aspect could have been meant *literally*, as well as metaphorically. When meeting with senators, it would be wise to be the only armed man in the room. Oddly, Augustus may have, in his own home, let down his guard too readily – as he did not suspect the innocent-looking figs on which Livia had smeared poison (55.22.1–2 and 56.30.2). ["It took me ALL NIGHT," in Siân Phillips' inimitable rendition in *I, Claudius* (1976).]

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44 On the connections between the passages, see most recently Lindholmer 2018, 576–577.

45 See Allen 2020, especially 56, on Livia's suggestions for correcting the errors of both Sulla and Caesar.

Therefore, in Dio's estimation, Augustus was wise to be prepared for violence when meeting with senators, despite the rapidly diminishing prospect that it would actually occur. While it has become a common trope to identify Augustus as Dio's ideal emperor, throughout his *History* several recent studies have both underscored this theme and posed subtle challenges to it. Privileged to enjoy 44 years at the head of a new governmental system, Octavian/Augustus did run into complications along the way to establishing the "ideal" of shared rule between the emperor and his senatorial elite. In his careful investigation of, particularly, the source tradition that lay behind Dio's portrait of the relationship between Augustus and the Senate, Manuwald placed Augustus' dominant position in the narrative squarely within the context of Dio's own lifetime. Given that the question of replacing the institutional monarchy was a non-starter in Dio's period, it only remained to determine what sort of an emperor would be best for the empire. For Dio, then, Augustus was the prototypical monarch whom his contemporaries should strive to emulate.[46]

In Anglophone scholarship, the classic statement of this connection between Dio's reality and the Augustan paradigm was made in 1990 by Reinhold and Swan, and it has served as the centerpiece of the succinct and sensible arguments recently published by Jesper Madsen. Dio chose to "mitigate the early ruthlessness" of Octavian, according to Reinhold and Swan, in the interest of presenting Augustus as "the ideal *princeps*" and the institutions he had established as "the norm for the principate."[47] Having nearly lost his own life to military insubordination and tyrannical behavior by out-of-control emperors, Dio hoped to reinstate the ideal of shared rule, a non-coercive "partnership" between senators and the monarch:[48]

> Troubled about the future of this his own class under emperors like Commodus and Caracalla, who subjected senators to terror and bloodbath, Dio found in Augustus an exemplar who adhered to the principle of shared power between *princeps* and senate, as respected partners in governance. Such a partnership, free of coercion and based on recognition by the monarch of a dedicated elite, was in Dio's eyes basic to the rule of the good *princeps*, under whom the senatorial order would be threatened

46 Manuwald 1979, 281: "Ablehnung oder Bejahung der Monarchie war zur Zeit Dios kein aktuelles Problem mehr, aktuell waren allenfalls Fragen der Ausgestaltung der Monarchie im Einzelnen. Von daher gesehen und von der Tatsache aus, daß Augustus zur Zeit Dios als guter und vorbildlicher Kaiser angesehen werden konnte, ist es verständlich …".

47 Reinhold & Swan 1990, 158–159.

48 Reinhold & Swan 1990, 166.

> neither from above by tyranny nor from below by the upward movement of equestrians or (worse) the "common man".

Madsen endorses a portion of this position, but he extends Dio's identification of the "ideal emperor" to the narrative's *entirety*, from the early Republic through the history of his own time. The paradigmatic Senate should be consulted and should offer advice, but Dio may also have attributed the breakdown of the Republic itself to the overweening ambitions of senators and their competitive tendencies. Once the prospect of real power had been removed – and the emperor's supremacy made unassailable – the senators could take their proper role as advisors and assistants, and Augustus deserved credit for saving Rome from its own destruction. Madsen compellingly insists that one should read the full surviving corpus of Dio, while being mindful of the author's overall agenda, namely, to demonstrate "how democracy was destined to fail and how Augustus, because he replaced democracy with what Dio saw as a more stable form of constitution, was the one who saved the Romans from their own destruction."[49]

But what would happen if, once their standing relative to the *princeps* had been clarified, the senators *refused* even to offer their advice? Would protracted absenteeism from the senate-house have undermined this newly perfected system of shared governance? In a 2007 study of Augustan marriage laws, Kemezis drew attention to Dio's "ambiguity" and the "strangely ironic light" cast upon his paradigmatic *princeps*,[50] and two new analyses, published in the 2019 collection *The Alternative Augustan Age*, by Andrew Pettinger and Amy Russell,[51] have addressed the complicated – and sometimes contentious – relationship between Augustus and "his" senators. It is remarkable that, while there may have been a "recruitment crisis" at some point,[52] there was also at least one dramatic episode of a sharp *reduction* of the senatorial rolls, in 18 BCE. In Pettinger's estimation, this "purge", the "greatest … in Roman history by a considerable margin", was designed to reduce the Senate from "perhaps 800" members to the "traditional" 300.[53]

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49 Madsen 2020, 119. See also Madsen 2019, 495–496, for an effective summary of his position regarding Dio's personal experiences and his resultant defense of Augustus' "extreme actions", as well as Madsen's contribution to this volume.

50 Kemezis 2007, 270, 274.

51 Pettinger 2019; Russell 2019.

52 See Nicolet 1976, 30.

53 Pettinger 2019, 46–47 and 54–55. In light of Evans 1997, which demonstrates the impossibility of measuring the extent of the several "purges" of the senators' ranks throughout the 1st century BCE, Pettinger's suggestion of a reduction of 500 members may be too drastic.

Having already removed as many as 100–150 members in 28 BCE, Augustus experienced some potentially violent resistance from the Senators, but Pettinger intimates that the idea for the purge – and many elements of its execution – derived from a small coterie of *senators*, and not from the emperor himself. In his estimation, a group of traditionalists, attempting to assert the erstwhile privileges of their class, drove the purge in the belief that reduced numbers would be both more "traditional" and more likely to leave space for the more ambitious senators. It is telling, he notes, that Dio presents the *lectio* itself as a series of missteps and recalibrations on Augustus' part. In Dio's rendition (54.13.1–2), "When, as on the previous occasion, nobody would leave voluntarily," Augustus, "not wishing to be the only one blamed," selected a group of 30 men to share in an elaborate process for removing members that included both their opinions and a random element. Indeed, Pettinger observes that Augustus "did not want to remove senators himself – even, or especially, those he viewed as dangerous/undeserving."[54]

In a similar fashion, Russell shifts attention away from Augustus to the elite, attempting to discern "what the senators themselves made of the new order of things." She observes that the same year, 18 BCE, "also saw the *lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus*, a law which went further than any before it to define the Senate as an *ordo*,"[55] and she concludes that "they [i.e., the senators] doubled down on senatorial exclusivity and privilege."[56] For his part, Augustus worked "hard to produce discussion, and often failed. He wanted a forum for debate, and he got a series of yes-men."[57] The senators were thus assertive of their privileges in some respects, yet paradoxically reticent in speaking up to the emperor.[58] As she reasonably comments, "Not only were there fewer substantive issues to discuss, but the prizes for winning the debate were less enticing and the risks of speaking up greater."[59]

In fact, it is remarkable how often both Pettinger and Russell draw on a field of words related to risk/danger/peril in these studies of the senatorial class. Pettinger begins his study by characterizing Augustus' path toward monarchy

54 Pettinger 2019, 58–59.

55 Russell 2019, 326 & 339. She does not, however, comment on the revisions to the law in 9 CE, which surely indicates that some, at least, of its provisions had failed to gain acceptance.

56 Russell 2019, 340.

57 Russell 2019, 332–333.

58 Suetonius does note at least one occasion of outspokenness, by Antistius Labeo, but he observes that no one was punished for free speaking, even when this liberty manifested as "contumacious insolence" (*Aug.* 54).

59 Russell 2019, 331.

as "uncertain" and "unclear", and the prospect of removing 500 members from the elite at one swipe as "dangerous in any society."[60] As it turned out, Dio notes, Augustus was forced to be satisfied with a reduction of the total number to "600" (54.14.1). Dio does note that the *princeps* made subsequent attempts to reduce the ranks, but this time he does not provide the resulting numbers (54.14.3–4). Pettinger claims that even the ancient sources would "immediately recognize" Augustus' original target of 300 "as being ludicrous and potentially dangerous."[61] On the other hand, active participation in Augustus' sight was also risky. Russell resolves the seeming contradiction between the senators' resistance to being removed from the rolls and the "crisis of recruitment" that characterized the period. Even if being a senator was "unattractive, to be expelled was considered a mark of ignominy, as Augustus' attempts to couch the expulsions in softer language demonstrate."[62] Nevertheless, discretion being the better part of valor, it may have been wise quietly to stop attending meetings once one's status became defined in social, rather than in political, terms. By this analysis, the few remaining "yes-men" would continue to attend – to curry the monarch's favor – while wiser heads would congratulate themselves that they were too busy to attend meetings, but still could, if they so desired.

However, I think there is a simpler way to resolve this problem. By placing senatorial attendance against the backdrop of Dio's own experiences regarding "danger" and "safety", we can detect hints of mutual suspicion between the monarch and his supposed partners in government. While the senators' fear seems reasonable, did Augustus also have cause to be worried as he surveyed the senators around him? The study of the degree, character, and forms of "opposition" to Augustus has been undertaken in the past, but not, I think, fully appreciated in previous scholarship. The best study – again from the 1990 collection on Augustus entitled *Between Republic and Empire* – may minimize the effectiveness of any coordinated resistance among the senators to the imposition of monarchic rule. Relegating the breastplate incident to two footnotes, Raaflaub and Samons conclude that "the senators offered determined and open collective opposition only when the *princeps* interfered with their traditional privileges and immediate social and economic interests."[63] They further contend that "dissatisfaction and criticism were expressed in other ways," such as through the courts and in oratorical and philosophical exercises, but that

60 Pettinger 2019, 46 & 49.
61 Pettinger 2019, 60.
62 Russell 2019, 338.
63 Raaflaub & Samons 1990, 435, with 421, n. 12, and 434, n. 71.

potential resistance among the senators was too "fragmented" to be anything other than "scattered, isolated, ineffective, and, overall, minimal."[64]

But could "opposition" take on a less overt – but no less galling – form, in the willful boycotting of senatorial meetings, where members would be under the emperor's watchful (and physically defended) eye? While Talbert's vision of the "antiquarian" and restorative efforts of Augustus has remained dominant since the 1980s, there has been another line of thought, reflected particularly in the various works of André Chastagnol. This scholar's 1992 monograph *Le Sénat romain à l'époque impériale* was fashioned from several short pieces published over previous decades, but it opens with a subtle and thoughtful reflection that draws on contemporary French history, specifically concerning the transitional moment between the Fourth and Fifth Republics in 1958.

As early as a 1980 Festschrift article, Chastagnol had developed the idea that, after Actium, Augustus' long-term objective was "to diminish – and no longer to augment – the effective power" of the Senate and to promote "*une politique de fermeture*" (a policy of closing/snapping shut), originally in regard to the senatorial rolls.[65] Commenting on "the problem of the senatorial quorum" in the Republic and the Empire ten years later, Chastagnol again turned to the phenomenon of "senatorial discontent" as a means of understanding why the quorum of 400 members was so difficult to maintain. (Preferring Dio's specific figure – without including subsequent purges – a quorum of 400/600, or 66.67%, for conducting business would have seemed attainable.) Seven years later, in 11 BCE, Augustus had to admit that this traditional quorum was now *un*attainable, but only after he realized that "he had overestimated the conscientiousness and punctuality of the senators." These senators "manifested their discontent, among other well-known moves in this same period, by their absenteeism" (*qui manifestaient leur mécontentement … par l'absentéisme*).[66] Accordingly, it was in reaction to this "manifestation of discontent" and nonparticipation that Augustus "vigorously [and] in a strict manner" moved on all sorts of matters in the law of 9 BCE.[67] However, as the focus of this article was on senatorial quorum as understood in the late second century (and on Dio's view of it, as a senator himself), Augustus' specific goals – and those of his "discontents" – were not explored at greater length.

64 Raaflaub & Samons 1990, 453–454.

65 Chastagnol 1980, 465. This sentence was imported, virtually unchanged, into the opening paragraph of the 1992 book's second chapter, entitled "*La diminution de l'effectif sous le règne d'Auguste*."

66 Chastagnol 1990, 158.

67 Chastagnol 1990, 159–160.

Nevertheless, in the 1992 monograph, Chastagnol made a bold – and perhaps even a startling – suggestion concerning the absenteeism phenomenon of the 10s BCE. In reaction to the waves of downsizing through which their numbers and their powers had been diminished, the senators "manifested their bitterness by certain acts of refusal, of strikes sometimes hidden and sometimes open" (*Ils manifestèrent leur amertume par des actes de refus, de grève tantôt perlée tantôt ouverte*), and "in pouting with a certain ostentation" (*en boudant avec une certaine ostentation*).[68] If one evaluates the voluntary "absenting of oneself" as a form of strike, it is perhaps feasible to gauge the extent of opposition, at least at this "transitional" moment in the new regime. By focusing attention on the full body of the *senatus*, rather than merely on their putative *princeps*, Chastagnol demonstrated that absenteeism could itself be a tactic of resistance, one that would have elicited a swift and interventionist response from Augustus.

Thrasea Paetus, as characterized by Tacitus (e.g., *Ann.* 16.22, 27), might be only the most famous example of a senator whose deliberate absence from the Senate was viewed as an expression, albeit a muted one, of opposition to the emperor's government. Dio also admired Paetus' stance – and contrasted his silence with the pointless opposition of Paetus' son-in-law Helvidius Priscus (Cass. Dio 66[65].12.1 and 66[65].13.1–2). In his study of "outspokenness" throughout Dio's work, Mallan observes that Paetus' actions "spoke louder than words," but that his refusal to provide advice to Nero "struck at the very heart of this ideology [i.e., of senatorial consensus]." Dio's praise may, therefore, "reveal something of an underlying tension in Dio's attitudes towards political behavior and ideology."[69]

Likewise, if one views the Roman senators' absenteeism as a resistance tactic, akin to a silent strike, Augustus' outrage is understandable. If he perceived their ignoring of his summons to attend as seditious discontent, the swift and "clumsy" measures he took to rectify the situation can be explained. By fining and shaming non-attendees, Augustus – always on the lookout for potential rivals – hoped to obtain a full house, preferably *unarmed*, upon whom he could train a vigilant, and a fully *armed*, visage. Left to their own devices – and at home – conspiracies could be discussed, formulated, and eventually implemented. "Safety First" would thus be a wise policy to follow – though a concealed breastplate would have made sure doubly sure.

68 Chastagnol 1992, 56.

69 Mallan 2016, 271–272.

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CHAPTER 3

Cassius Dio and the Ideal Constitution

Jasper Majbom Madsen

1 Introduction

This article focuses on what Cassius Dio believed was the ideal form of constitution for the city of Rome. Although scholars have long discussed Dio's political position and how in his mind the Romans were to organize the most stable form of government, our historian – a key source, for instance, for the Augustan Settlement in 27 BCE – is usually not counted among the political theorists of antiquity.[1] One exception to that rule is Carsana's *La teoria della 'Costituzione Mista' nell'età imperiale Romana* (1990), where Dio is seen as a political theorist who spoke in favor of a mixed constitution that Carsana defines as a form of government where the emperor cooperated closely with the empire's political elite.[2] But it is worth noticing that Dio's thoughts on Roman politics are mentioned only briefly in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (2005),[3] hardly at all by Hammer in his *Roman Political Thought: From Cicero to Augustine* (2014), and only on a few occasions by Atkins in his *Roman Political Thought* (2018).

The aim of this article is to show how Dio's political analyses engage with the works of Rome's other writers for whom the issue of government was close to their heart. What I hope to show in the following is that Dio's account of Roman politics was cohesive, thoughtful, and in dialogue with the works of both republican and imperial commentators. Based on what proves to be rather systematic political thinking, Dio offers his readers independent analyses of Roman politics, political history, and the different constitutional crises Rome faced at different moments in time. Dio's thoughts on what would constitute the ideal form of government reveal a different way of thinking than those of other imperial writers such as Dio Chrysostom, Pliny the Younger, and

1 On Dio's thoughts on monarchy versus democracy, see Millar 1964, 106–116; Manuwald 1979, 8–26 esp. 25–26; Reinhold 1988, 12–15, 165–170; Rich 1989, 101–102; Swan 2004, 17–21, 346–349; Kemezis 2014, 139–145; Carsana 2016, 85–86, 90; Coltelloni-Trannoy 2016a, 559; Coltelloni-Trannoy, 2016b, 626; Ando 2016; 568–572; Markov 2019, 284–289.

2 Carsana 1990, 59–60; see also Carsana 2016, 557–558.

3 See Wiedemann 2005, 526.

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Tacitus, or from the views of *libertas* as laid out by Cicero, Sallust, and Livy who wrote in the republican and earlier imperial periods.[4]

Not without reason, the forms of monarchical rule that Dio favored have been seen to promote safety and social status over actual political influence by leaving essentially all the important decisions in the hands of the emperor.[5] Much has happened, however, since Millar attributed these almost reactive ambitions to Dio. In studies of the *princeps civitatis* as a political phenomenon, Wallace-Hadrill, Winterling, and more recently Bono have pointed to the emperor's courteous public recognition of his former fellow senators as still his equals, while Weisweiler has shown that some emperors took on the role of a magistrate who acted within the scope offered to them by the Senate.[6] Recently Ando has demonstrated the way in which Dio uses the Agrippa-Maecenas dialogue to outline the thoughts behind the institutionalization of monarchical rule in the early reign of Augustus. According to Ando, Dio's Maecenas lays out for Augustus how to organize a monarchical form of government that would win support and legitimacy among members of the Senate. Here, the key issue is to set up a form of organization where the Senate is allowed a role both in the preparation of new legislation, in legal matters – they were the ones to pass verdicts on their peers – and in the management of public affairs (52.31.1–2; 52.31.3–9).[7]

This way of thinking, according to Carsana, reaches back to at least the writer Dionysius of Halicarnassus and his coverage of the reign of Romulus, where the Senate is said to have approved the king's proposals, which in effect left the final decision in the hands of the senators.[8] According to Carsana, Dio is promoting a moderate form of constitution, where the Senate and the monarch share the responsibility of government through collaboration.[9]

The following discussion falls into two parts. First, I focus on how Dio and his fellow political commentators understood the Principate and the role of the *princeps* differently depending on their own experiences with autocratic rule. Where Dio Chrysostom in the late first and early second century presented a more abstract view of what in his eyes constituted the ideal form of monarchical rule, the senators Pliny and Tacitus saw Roman politics in the light of

4 Arena 2012, 45–48, 53–54, 58.

5 Millar 1964, 107. See also Wirszubski 1950, 166–167 on how Tacitus had similar thoughts on status and safety for members of the Senate.

6 Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 44; Winterling 1999, 70, 107 and 113; Weisweiler 2015, 19; Bono 2018, 70, 85; Bono 2020.

7 Ando 2016, 570–572. See also Perry and Markov in this volume.

8 Carsana 1990, 35. See also Dion. Hal. 2.14.2.

9 Carsana 1990, 85; Carsana 2016, 556–558.

reigns of Domitian, Nerva, Trajan and, in the case of Tacitus, the succession of Hadrian. Cassius Dio, on the other hand, with Thucydides' thoughts on realism as his theoretical framework, seems considerably less optimistic about man's ability to show moderation and maintain harmony unless the competition for magistracies and commands was firmly regulated. Unlike Pliny and Tacitus, Dio seems to have seen no need to allow Rome's political elite any real influence on the decision-making process and is therefore not promoting a mixed constitution, wherein the Senate would be considered an equal partner with the monarch. As I hope to show in the following, Rome's senators, the ones Dio holds responsible for the political chaos in the Republic, had proven historically unfit to rule.[10] To maintain stability, the senators had to take a step back from the political forefront and remain the monarchs' loyal advisors.

The second aim is to show that Dio had higher ambitions on behalf of his peers than safety, social status, and symbolic courtesy on the part of the monarch. Dio did not envision a mixed constitution. But, as I hope to show, he is pleading for a form of monarchy where the empire's best men had real power within reach either indirectly, through a form of representative monarchy in which the monarch was chosen from among the most qualified senators, or directly as the chosen emperor acting on behalf of his peers.

As we shall see in the second part of the article, Dio used the practice of the adoptive emperors as a model that in his eyes would ensure that the next monarch in line had the political and military skills and the personal qualities required for the task of supreme rule. Even if the reality of adoptive emperors did not meet Dio's idealized view on the potential of non-dynastic succession (from Trajan to Marcus Aurelius the emperors were all to some degree related), the practice of choosing the successor from among members of the senatorial order had the potential to ensure that the next emperor would be more experienced and better prepared to take on the responsibility as sole ruler than young sons or other male relatives were.[11] We begin the discussion with Dio's thoughts on how to organize a form of monarchical rule that would allow the emperor to remain in full control over the decision-making process and of the army, without stepping over the fine line between legitimate one-man rule and tyranny.

10 For recent discussions on Dio's view on the senatorial order in the age of the Republic, see Lindholmer 2019, 72–73. On how Rome's politics suffered from the same selfish behaviour in the Early and Middle Republic, see also Madsen 2019a.

11 For family relationships within the Antonine line of succession see, e.g., Hdn. 1.7.4 and Hekster 2001, 36–37, 39, 42–43.

2 On the Need for One-Man Rule

Dio's skepticism towards democratic rule is well known to students of the *Roman History*, just as it is generally accepted that one of Dio's several agendas was to demonstrate how democracy was both impractical and unstable. Inspired by Thucydides, Dio offers a reconstruction of Roman history in which competition for power and prestige, envy, hate, and greed led to political crisis and civil wars.[12] This is most noticeable in his coverage of late republican Rome, but an abundance of greed and personal ambition is also the underlying explanation for political crises in the regal period, in the Early and Middle Republic and in the Empire.[13] According to Dio, the only way to ensure stability and harmony among members of the political elite, and between Rome's social layers, was a form of monarchical rule in which one man was in full control over the legislative process and the army.

Dio's thoughts on ideal monarchical rule are laid out in the Agrippa-Maecenas dialogue (Book 52) and in the following four books, where Dio covers the reign of Augustus (Books 53–56), which belong to the part of the *Roman History* where we are fortunate enough to have the historian's own text with only a few lacunae. We are, therefore, on reasonably firm ground when we read the dialogue as a reflection of Dio's own thoughts on the benefits and challenges of one-man rule.[14]

The frame of the ideal monarchy is outlined in the opening passages of Maecenas' speech. As Dio has Maecenas construct his argument, it is the

12 On human nature and civil war, see Thuc. 3.82–83. See also Macleod 1979, 58–59; Reinhold 1985, 30–31; Rees 2011, 79–80; Lange 2019a; Lange 2019b; Lange 2020; Lange 2021. See also Polyb. 6.18, for his analysis of how human psychology promoted self-interest over the interests of the commonwealth. On destructive competition, see Madsen 2016, 143–146; Atkins 2018, 23. Lindholmer 2019, 89–93; Lindholmer 2020, 93–96. For the view of how Dio may have been more sceptical towards monarchical rule, see Manuwald 1979, 8–27.

13 Madsen 2019a.

14 For studies on Dio's Agrippa-Maecenas dialogue, see Hammond 1932, 101–102 on how the dialogue reflects how Dio believed the Principate of Augustus was formed; for the way in which Dio should have been more focused on political issues relevant in his own time than in the Age of Augustus, see Bleicken 1962, 448; on how the dialogue or at least the part attributed to Maecenas was held at the court of Caracalla, see also Millar 1964, 104–105. On the dialogue, see also Aalders 1986, 296–299; Reinhold 1988, 165, 170; Fomin 2016, 217–220. For an analysis of how both parts of the dialogue reflect Dio's political views and how he offers sound arguments for both forms of constitutions, see Adler 2012, 512. See also Horst 2010 for an analysis of how Dio envisioned a democratic form of one-man rule; see also Cresci Marrone 2016, 60–68; France 2016; 773; Vielberg 2016; 245–248; Burden-Strevens (forthcoming).

monarch who is responsible for passing new laws after considering the advice of the senators. It is the monarch's own decision whether to wage war or not, decisions that every citizen in Rome, no matter their status, was to obey; it is also the monarch's choice of whom to appoint as commander (52.15.1–3). The advantages Dio mentions are that every decision that the monarch makes in consultation with his advisors would become law and that the commanders would be selected on the strength of their merits alone. Maecenas also suggests that the monarch should appoint praetors and consuls for election but without interference from the Senate and the people as that would revive the destructive competition among the candidates (52.20.2-3; 52.19.1–2).[15]

Scholars who argue that Maecenas' speech suggests a mixed constitution usually emphasize the recommendation that new laws should be enacted through the Senate as this would improve the dignity and legitimacy of new laws. Another aspect that suggests an element of shared responsibility is when Maecenas argues that senators should be granted the power to handle Rome's foreign affairs and act as judges in cases where senators or members of their families were charged with crimes, where conviction would lead to the loss of citizenship, exile or capital punishment (52.31).[16] Maecenas is suggesting a considerable degree of collaboration between the monarch and members of the political elite. Depending on the balance of power between the institutions, the collaboration between the senators and the monarch may be defined as a mixed constitution as in the example outlined by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in his description of how the Senate improved the legislation proposed by Romulus.[17]

This brings us to the question of checks and balances between institutions – the other element in a mixed constitution. According to Dionysius, with its right to approve or block Romulus' proposals, the political elite had a right to check the king, an arrangement that balanced the powers between the two institutions. In how Maecenas envisions the ideal monarchy, there is no room for checks and balances and therefore no equality or shared power between the monarch and members of Rome's political elite. True, the Senate should, according to Dio, handle foreign affairs and be given the means to do so efficiently, but the senators were not to be given any legislative powers of their own or the opportunity to block new laws that were laid out by the emperor.[18]

A key question, however, is what status Dio's Maecenas is prepared to offer the senators and whether they are to be seen as the monarch's equal partners

15 Reinhold 1988, 190.

16 Carsana 1990; Bono 2020.

17 Carsana 1990, 35. See Dion. Hal. 2.14.2–3.

18 Ando 2016, 570.

or his loyal hands. Reading Maecenas' part of the dialogue, there is little to suggest that the senators were to be Augustus' partners and there is no sign in the model laid out by Maecenas, or in the following books, for that matter, that the Senate had or should have been given the opportunity to block Augustus or to pass laws against his will. On the contrary, Dio points out that no decision was made that Augustus was against, and it is worth stressing once more that in Maecenas' opinion, Augustus was to select both the senators and magistrates as he saw fit, which in effect would classify the Senate as an institution to which he recruited the members (53.16–17). True, there were to be both praetorian and consular elections, but it was Augustus who decided who would be able to run for office. Yet, Augustus would be wise to discuss his ideas, new laws, and various decisions with members of the Senate in plenary session or in the small group of senators and magistrates, the *consilium principis*, and listen carefully to the advice offered in these settings. It was these debates that granted him and his laws legitimacy, but the role Maecenas envisions for the senators was advisory, not legislative.

Dio does note that at the time of Augustus' death it was widely accepted that, by combining democratic and monarchical elements, the emperor had managed to maintain the freedom of the Romans and at the same time provide much-needed stability (56.43).[19] As a result of his arrangement, his fellow Romans were blessed with a life free from the arrogance of democracy and from the terror of a tyrant. Dio's remark on the way in which the combination of the democratic and the monarchical allowed the Romans to be subjects of royalty without being slaves, and citizens in a democracy without suffering from the struggle between factions is, however, not tied to any constitutional arrangement or specific institutions. It was a state of affairs brought into being by Augustus, his character, his wisdom and his *civilitas*, and it is hardly incidental that the Senate is not mentioned in what comes across as an obvious success.[20]

3 Monarchy in a Late-First and Early-Second Century Perspective

Even if there are many overlapping thoughts on how the emperor was to manage his powers and engage with Rome's other social groups, there are significant divergences between Cassius Dio's constitutional theories and those of

19 See recently Carsana 2016, 557 for an analysis of the way in which Dio's reference to democratic and monarchical aspects of Augustus' reign and how these thoughts suggest that Dio saw the Principate of Augustus as a mixed constitution, where the emperor shared his powers with members of the political elite.

20 On *civilitas* in Dio and his Greek translation for this term δημοκρατικώτατος, see Wallace-Hadrill 1982, 44.

the other political commentators who wrote their texts either in the late first or second century. Dio Chrysostom, Dio Cassius' fellow Bithynian and a man who found himself on the fringes of a plot against Domitian, was not particularly interested in Rome's political institutions.[21] It is, however, worth noticing that Dio Chrysostom spoke favorably about Rome, Roman rule, and the ruling emperor (apparently Vespasian) in the speech to the Alexandrians.[22] Yet, as to be expected from a man of a Greek cultural background with roots in the intellectual circles and a style that resonates with the cultural and literary tradition often referred to as the Second Sophistic, Dio Chrysostom resurfaces not only as a strong critic of Rome and Roman culture but also as a man who hoped to return to a role in or around the political scene in Rome – perhaps as a philosopher and a master of political thinking preferably in the vicinity of the emperor's court.[23]

While Dio's criticism of Rome is most apparent in the oration *On Exile* (*Or.* 13), staged in front of an Athenian audience, it is in his *Kingship Orations* that he offers his thoughts on the ideal rule and the right form of constitution, and where he volunteers his views on how to be the best kind of monarch. According to his own words, Dio Chrysostom was recalled by Nerva, whom he refers to as a friend just as he does in the case of Trajan. He is therefore likely to embark on the *Kingship Orations* as someone who wants the best from Trajan, the obvious recipient of the given advice, whose reign he describes as the blessed and god-given government presently in place (*Or.* 3.50).[24]

Like Cassius Dio, Dio Chrysostom agrees that one-man rule is the most practical and stable form of government – and not just for Rome, as the discussion is kept at a more general level than the political situation in imperial Rome. In his conclusion of what is staged as a Socratic dialogue, the orator points to how followers of Socrates have traditionally defined government as a lawful ordering of men. Monarchy (βασιλεία), conversely, is defined negatively as the form of rule in which the king's will was law. Of the three possible forms of government, the principate under Trajan's lawful guidance is the best and most practical form of rule, whereas aristocracy and democracy were more unstable choices. But just below lawful one-man rule lurked monarchy, a form of rule where, according to Dio Chrysostom, the king's will would be the law and tyranny where the sole ruler's use of force led to the ruin of others (*Or.* 3.42–49).

21 Jones 1978, 5–7, 16–17; Carsana 1990, 57; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 120–122.

22 Moles 1990, 87; Jones 1978, 36; Madsen 2009, 111.

23 Dio Chry. *Or.* 13.10–13; 13.29–37. Swain 1996, 211–212; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 124–125.

24 Jones 1978, 117–120; Moles 1990, 301–303; Swain 1996, 195; Whitmarsh 2001, 156–160; Madsen 2014, 20–21.

Domitian is the straightforward target here. In *On Exile*, which was probably written before the composition of the *Kingship Orations*, Dio Chrysostom compares the reign of the last of the Flavian emperors with the practice of barbaric Scythian kings (*Or.* 13.1). Additional sources of inspiration are the authors of traditional Greek education: Plato, Aristotle, and Homer, whom he quotes in support of his view that the rule of the many was impractical. A noticeable difference between Cassius Dio and Dio Chrysostom's perception of monarchy is that in the *Kingship Orations* the sole ruler is not elevated above the law. Should he try to set himself above the law, he would immediately reduce himself from a legitimate sole ruler to a monarch whose arbitrary will was the law or to a tyrant who would be ready to use violence against fellow citizens to get his way (3.43–6).[25]

Dio Chrysostom took a Stoic-inspired philosophical approach to the question of rule – one that to some would appear learned and detached from petty politics in the city of Rome (*Or.* 3.58–60).[26] The orator might seem more philosophical in his approach to rule and rulership than Cassius Dio, Pliny, and Tacitus are, but he is not necessarily less political in what he hoped to achieve. Having established that sole rule based on the letter of the law was the best form of rule, Dio Chrysostom moves on to show his readers how the rule of the best and strongest should follow the law of nature (*Or.* 3.50).[27]

As it was only natural in the animal kingdom that the strong cared for the weak, so should the earthly king, like the divine king, lead and protect his subjects.[28] Such a king would be favored by the gods. But in order to earn the love of his people, the king would have to be god-fearing and feel convinced that his rule must be as beneficial to his subjects as the rule of the gods was to him (*Or.* 3.51–52). Like a shepherd or a herd leader in the animal kingdom, the king should take the responsibility upon himself to lead his people, and he should be just as tireless in doing so as peasants are in caring for their land or sea-captains for their ships and crews (*Or.* 3.56–57). In the third of the *Kingship Orations*, Dio Chrysostom does not think in terms of an institutionalized aristocracy like the Roman Senate. Yet, as indicated elsewhere in the corpus of speeches in the short dialogue on Agamemnon, he points to how kings are dependent on the support and advice of members of the aristocracy, like Nestor, whose criticism of Agamemnon's conduct in the conflict with Achilles

25 Hom. *Il*. 2.190–197; Arist. *Rh.* 1406a23. Madsen 2014, 20–21.

26 For a comparison of Dio Chrysostom and Seneca, see Atkins 2018, 33.

27 On the law of nature, see Carsana 1990, 57.

28 For further discussion, see Swain 1996, 195–200, also on how Dio Chrysostom may not have been convinced Trajan met the description of what he believed to be a good king.

forces the king to change his course (*Or.* 56.7–9, 11, 14–15).[29] What is interesting to note is that there is no room for a Senate or a formalized aristocratic elite in Dio Chrysostom's ideal monarchy, yet the king was still to seek advice and support from the aristocracy in order to remain within the boundaries of legitimate kingship.

Turning to the king's virtues and personal qualities, Dio Chrysostom had the same expectations as Cassius Dio and Pliny: The king should be welcoming, uncorrupt, balanced, and free from fear. He should legitimize his right to rule by being fair, tolerant, hardworking, god-fearing, brave, cautious, and ready to share the hardship of his subjects just as he should earn their respect and trust rather than impress them with fear and terror (*Or.* 1.12–13; 1.25). Only then could he claim to be a fellow soldier, a friend of his associates, and a father of his subjects (*Or.* 1.22).

As someone who was not a member of the Senate but still tied to the political elite through his capacity as friend or teacher of members of the Roman elite (*Or.* 13.1), Dio Chrysostom felt no need to promote a group of privileged, luxurious and, in his eyes, poorly educated and culturally inferior men whose power was trodden underfoot by the tyranny of Domitian (*Or.* 13.29–34). His aim, though, was no less political. As someone who wrote his texts at the turn of the second century when members of the Greek civic elite had not yet become a fully integrated part of the political establishment in the capital, what Dio Chrysostom pleaded for was a form of government in which the emperor ruled not in cooperation with a council like the Senate, but with the support of a court of advisors and different kinds of specialists, as in a Hellenistic kingdom, where men like the orator himself would serve as the king's hand-picked and trusted companions.[30] This would earn Dio Chrysostom and members of the Greek intellectual elite like him the influence for which they lacked sufficient status in the eyes of the political elite in Rome. Yet, there is also an attempt, as we saw in the case of Cassius Dio, to stir the emperor in a certain direction by offering guidance before the decision was made so that the king would not become a tyrant – a moral pressure that, as we shall see below, Pliny the Younger also uses in his panegyric to Trajan.[31]

Pliny the Younger was, like Dio Chrysostom, an intellectual keen to share his thoughts on how to organize the most harmonious form of one-man rule.

29 For Carsana's thoughts on how Dio is here offering thoughts in favour of a shared constitution based on divided responsibilities between the Senate and *princeps*, see 1990, 59–60.

30 For a discussion of how the authors behind kingship orations wanted to promote themselves as the right kind of advisors, see Haake 2013; 184; Jones 2016, 312–314.

31 Moles 1990, 307–308.

Not surprisingly in a speech intended as a gesture of thanks to the emperor who granted him the consulship in 100 CE, Trajan's version of the principate meets all of Pliny's criteria. As in the case of the two Dios, Pliny was a strong believer in the monarchy. He had no other choice in a panegyric to Trajan, but his belief in the monarchy is also reflected in his letters, particularly those of Book 10, where he makes every effort to show the close collaboration between the *princeps* and himself as governor.[32] Yet, judging from the texts, Pliny pictures a different form of monarchy than Cassius Dio. The senators are here more involved in the political process with a real or at least more substantial say in the decision-making process. Pliny celebrates how the new emperor offered the Senate a share in rule when demanding its members assume the responsibility of rule for the benefit of the people (*Pan.* 66.2–4):

> *Inluxerat primus consulatus tui dies, quo tu curiam ingressus nunc singulos, nunc universos adhortatus es resumere libertatem, capessere quasi communis imperi curas, invigilare publicis utilitatibus et insurgere. Omnes ante te eadem ista dixerunt, nemini tamen ante te creditum est. Erant sub oculis naufragia multorum, quos insidiosa tranquillitate provectos improvisus turbo perculerat. Quod enim tam infidum mare quam blanditiae principum illorum, quibus tanta levitas tanta fraus, ut facilius esset iratos quam propitios cavere? Te vero securi et alacres quo vocas sequimur. Iubes esse liberos: erimus; iubes quae sentimus promere in medium: proferemus. Neque enim adhuc ignavia quadam et insito torpore cessavimus: terror et metus et misera illa ex periculis facta prudentia monebat, ut a re publica* (⟨*ubi*⟩ *erat autem omnino res publica?*) *oculos aures animos averteremus.*
>
> The first day of your consulship had hardly dawned before you entered the Senate-house and exhorted us, individually and collectively, to resume our freedom, to take up the responsibilities of the power we might be thought to share, to watch over the interests of the people, and to take action. All your predecessors had said the same, but none had been believed. In our mind's eye were the shipwrecks of the many who had advanced in a hazardous period of calm, only to be sunk by an unforeseen storm; for no sea could be more treacherous than the flattery of those emperors whose instability and guile made it more difficult to be on guard against their favour than their wrath. But in your case, we have no fears and are all eager to follow your lead. You bid us be free, and we shall be free; you tell us to express ourselves openly, and we shall do

32 Woolf 2006; Stadter 2006; Noreña 2007; Lavan 2018.

> so, for our previous hesitation was due to no cowardice or natural inertia, but to fear and apprehension, and the lamentable caution born of our perils which bade us turn eyes and ears and minds from our country, from that republic which was utterly destroyed.[33]

Pan. 66.2–4 is a key moment in Pliny's address to Trajan. It is here that he offers the impression of how the emperor on his first day as consul ordered his peers to free themselves from their former slavery and share the responsibility of power to watch over the interests of the people. Pliny says that the senators were to speak their minds freely, which reminds us of Cassius Dio's later conception of the Senate as an advisory board. Yet, the reference to how the senators were to have a share in Trajan's power embraces, at least implicitly, the notion of political initiative as well as the idea that the senators should be given an opportunity to object to laws or decisions that they deemed worked against the interests of the people. That kind of power suggests a different form of monarchical rule from what Dio would suggest a century later, where the senators could counsel the *princeps* but never block his proposals or pass initiatives that they believed were needed against the emperor's will.

The way in which Pliny presents Trajan as an emperor who shares political power also appears in Book 10 of his *Letters*. Even if we do not go as far as Woolf, Stadter, and Noreña in reading the correspondence with Trajan as largely a literary construct, in which Pliny wrote Trajan's letters as well as his own, Book 10 does convey the impression of a respectful collaboration between the *optimus princeps* who shares responsibility with his trusted, competent governor who was given a considerable degree of authority and encouragement to govern his province as he saw fit.[34] The tone and exchange of thoughts are mutually respectful. Trajan usually agrees with Pliny's solutions and the dispositions he has made. He rules when he must and takes over larger problems, such as the completion of aqueducts, which were too big to handle on the level of the governor. Some of Trajan's answers contain subtle criticism of Pliny, but usually in contexts where Trajan wants Pliny to take responsibility and solve the problem. Pliny may then be seen to connect the claim in the *Panegyricus* that Trajan bid the elite to be free with the letters where Pliny was expected to actually govern his province.

As a senator in the late first and early second centuries who seems to have been favored by Domitian, Pliny was keen to distance himself from the last emperor of the Flavian dynasty. But apart from the obvious attempt to change

33 Text and translation by Radice 1969.

34 Woolf 2006; Stadter 2006; Noreña 2007; *contra*, Madsen 2009, 13–14; Lavan 2018.

his reputation as a loyal servant to the previous regime, Pliny's panegyric also reads as a response to a more constricted political climate that began to emerge in the late 60s when Vespasian won the civil war in 68–70. With the fall of Domitian, Rome's political elite gained a sense of hope. Apart from clearing himself from whatever ties Pliny had to Domitian, the *Panegyricus* is also seemingly a document in which he expresses a hope that Trajan and future emperors would rule in a less autocratic fashion, leaving more room for the senators to share the responsibility of power. But the panegyric is also, much like Cassius Dio's Agrippa-Maecenas dialogue and Dio Chrysostom's *Kingship Orations*, a catalogue of how the emperor should conduct himself and use his powers so that after a promising start he would stay on the side of legitimate government and avoid falling into the trap of tyranny.[35]

In that sense, Pliny agrees with Dio Chrysostom that the emperor should be modest in nature, and he praises Trajan for his reluctance to accept titles such as *pater patriae* and the third consulship too readily, even if Trajan's reticence did not last long (*Pan*. 56–58). He also celebrates how Trajan showed no aspiration to be worshipped as a god, which he scorns previous emperors for doing (*Pan*. 2.3), and we hear how the senators were not afraid of him, how he treats the Senate with respect, and how he chooses not to pursue any of its members with *maiestas* trials, which to Pliny were the one and only way for emperors to incriminate persons who were free of crime (*Pan*. 42.1).[36]

Another senator with ties to the Flavian dynasty and its supporters was Tacitus, who, like Dio Chrysostom and Pliny, saw the rule of Nerva and Trajan as a considerable improvement compared to the reign of Domitian (Tac. *Agr*. 1–3, 45; *Hist* 1.1). Compared to Pliny and Dio Chrysostom, Tacitus expresses less idealized views on monarchical rule. Yet, the message he conveys at the beginning of his literary career still seems to follow a similar line of thinking as those outlined in Pliny's *Panegyricus*. Tacitus' standards of what human qualities the emperor would need to possess and how the *princeps* was to cooperate and share his rule with members of Rome's political elite were much like the ones we find in the published versions of Pliny's and Dio's speeches.

Like Pliny, Tacitus benefited personally from the reign of the Flavians. According to his own words, he reached the praetorship in 88 and likely held a governor's post in the following years before he returned to Rome to become

35 Durry 1938, 21–24; Radice 1968, 168; Braund 1998, 58–68; Roche 2011, 4–5; Rees 2011, 175.

36 On Trajan's show of moderation see Morford 1992, 587–589. For references to how Pliny presents Trajan's reign as the antithesis to Domitian's regime of terror and unlawful confiscation of property, see *Pan.* 50.1–2, for comments on Domitian's unfounded prosecutions of Senators, see *Pan.* 48, and for Pliny's remarks on the Domitian's habit of excluding senators from the decision-making process, see *Pan.* 66.

consul in 97 and later proconsul in Asia between 112–114 (Tac. *Hist.* 1.1).[37] Tacitus' father-in-law Agricola, also did well for himself under the Flavians when he was sent to Britannia and given the opportunity to prove his worth as governor in the unsettled province – the kind of post in which success would earn him some of the coveted political and military honors still sought after among members of the political elite in Rome (Tac. *Agr.* 4–9).

Even if Tacitus strongly criticized how the Principate suppressed the freedom of the political elite, and even if he believed Augustus was manipulative when he acquired his autocratic powers by consent from the war-torn Romans, who gave up their freedom in return for political stability, he still seems to acknowledge that one-man rule was the most stable form of government, at least in the case of Rome.[38] Apart from the praise of Nerva and Trajan for combining monarchy and freedom, Tacitus in the *Dialogus de oratoribus* has Curiatius Maternus warn against a return to Ciceronian eloquence if that meant a return to the political chaos of late republican Rome.[39] Recently, it has been argued that Tacitus criticized monarchical rule for taking away the incentive to engage in Roman politics and to improve the life of the Roman people and the population in the provinces.[40] Similarly, the changes to the art of speaking publicly and the hesitation in writing contemporary history – that Tacitus regrets – are seen by the historian as a loss of freedom and has accordingly been read as part of a more general criticism of monarchical rule (Tac. *Hist.* 1.1.1–2).[41]

Although it may be a step too far to see Tacitus as someone who hoped for a return to republican rule, the historian was no doubt a strong advocate of many of the same values that Roman republican thinkers saw as fundamental to true freedom. Like republican writers such as Cicero and Sallust, Tacitus saw duty, loyalty, modesty, ability, and energy as important personal virtues that members of the political elite in Rome should cultivate. Similarly, Tacitus also encouraged his peers to cherish wisdom, justice, honesty, and the art of being both strict and merciful. But as pointed out by Atkins, what Tacitus also underlines in the *Agricola* is that it is not the virtues *per se* that matter, but how such potential was put into use.[42]

37 Ash 2009, 86; Woodman 2009, 38–41.

38 Tac. *Ann.* 1.9.4–5; 4.32–33. See also Hammer 2014, 329.

39 Tac. *Hist.* 1.1; Tac. *Dial.* 41.4. See also Goldberg 2009, 75; Kemezis 2016, 107.

40 See Strunk 2017, 13. On how, according to Tacitus, speeches served to please rather than to empower the *princeps*, see also Kapust 2011, 111–114.

41 Strunk 2017, 151; Hammer 2014, 350–351.

42 Kapust 2011, 134–135; Arena 2012, 45–48; Atkins 2018, 82–83.

Tacitus pleaded for the right to thrive and reach one's full potential as a diligent servant of the *res publica*, the people, and the empire. As he states in his concluding remarks on Agricola's life, it should be everyone's right and duty to serve to the best of one's ability even under emperors like Domitian who were envious and vain, and who found it difficult to stomach the success of others (Tac. *Agr*. 42.3–4). With remarks like this, Tacitus goes back in time to Rome's old republican ideals, when members of the elite were not only expected to serve the *res publica* but also had the right to a share in the rule. In that light, Tacitus welcomed a modest competition for prestigious military and administrative posts and saw striving for honors among members of the elite as a positive thing and as one of the means by which members of the elite could acquire the recognition, service, and accomplishments to which they were entitled.[43]

As pointed out by Atkins, Tacitus' thoughts on how the political elite should be allowed to shine and pursue honors for themselves through impeccable service to the *res publica* would require that members of the elite be prepared to accept the new reality of the Principate. To be successful now required that senators, governors, and military commanders show modesty and compliance, acknowledging that power was now ultimately and legally in the hands of the emperor. Only by being humble and loyal to the emperor and accepting the political reality of the Principate would members of the political elite get the opportunity to participate in the administration of the empire – and so live up to what was left of the traditional aristocratic ideals of sharing the power.[44]

Thus, Tacitus accepts that by the end of the first century and beginning of the second century, there was no real alternative to monarchical rule and, therefore, members of the Senate had to find other ways to fulfil the traditional code of honor that had always characterized the respectable life. Heedless, idealized opposition was futile in Tacitus' eyes and did not help the course or improve the opportunity to strive, as spelled out in the case of Helvidius Priscus, who lost his life for his opposition to Vespasian – one of the less autocratic emperors (Tac. *Hist*. 4.3).

It is in Tacitus' coverage of the reign of Augustus that we see the most significant difference between how he and Cassius Dio perceived the Principate, the monarchical rule, and Roman politics more broadly. Later in life, in his briefer coverage of the late republican crisis at the opening of the *Annals*, Tacitus presents Octavian as a warlord who started the war and overthrew the state and its political institutions, hoping to secure supreme rule for himself. In his

43 Tac. *Agr.* 42.3–4. See Woodman 2014, 301–302; Kemezis 2016, 105–107; Atkins 2018, 82.

44 On how *modestia* and *obsequium* to Tacitus were more important virtues than they were to republican thinkers, see Tac. *Hist*. 4.3; Atkins 2018, 83.

efforts to win the civil war and hold on to his newly won powers as Rome's undisputed sole ruler, the last of the triumvirs forced, threatened, and bribed the people and members of the Senate to grant him full control of the army and of the political process in general. In short, they gave up their political freedom and their right to share the rule in return for peace and stability, and, in the case of the senators, for a life of pomp and luxury at the top of the social hierarchy (*Ann.* 1.2).

By gathering every relevant means of power around his own person, Tacitus' Augustus may have achieved full control of the state, which may well be exactly what he hoped for; but according to the historian, he broke the spirit of the senators in particular, who took a step back from politics and left not only the final decisions but the entire political process to the new *princeps*.[45] Gone was the ambition to improve both the policies and the decisions that were being made, for instance, through the medium of public speaking (*Ann.* 1.2; 1.7).[46]

To show how in the reign of Augustus the senators had already lost their ability or interest in sharing the rule, Tacitus points to how the Senate, led by Asinius Gallus, refused Tiberius' proposition to divide power and share it with the members of the Senate (*Ann.* 1.12).[47] As pointed out by Seager, Tacitus maintains criticism of how the senators appeared to lack the courage to step in and share the rule, such as when they remained passive when Tiberius encouraged them to take the political responsibility upon themselves (*Ann.* 6.51.1).[48] In that light, we may read Tacitus' critique of the Senate in the early first century both as a reminder that it was the duty of the Roman elite to take political responsibility and share the rule, but also as thoughts on how senators of his own day should take advantage of the new political climate which had emerged with the fall of Domitian and the accession of Nerva and Trajan (Tac. *Hist.* 1.2).

4 The Reign of Augustus

As illustrated in the beginning of Maecenas' speech in Dio's Book 52 (52.20.2–5), our historian strongly disagrees with the brief portrait Tacitus offers of Augustus at the beginning of Book 1 of the *Annals*. We cannot establish with

45 See also Hammer 2014, 329–330.

46 See Kapust 2011, 123–129, 137–140, for an analysis of how oratory still played a role in Roman politics; on free speech versus flattery in Tacitus, see Strunk 2017, 133–135.

47 See also Cass. Dio 57.2.5; Brunt 1988, 314; Hammer 2014, 331–334.

48 For how Tiberius tried to bring the Senate back into the decision-making process, see Seager 1972, 129–131; Levick 1999, 75–77; Wiedemann 1996, 204–206. On Tiberius sharing power with the Senate, see also Bono 2018.

certainty whether Dio knew the *Annals* nor, if he did consult Tacitus' work, how many of the books he actually read. Dio is not following Tacitus' view on monarchical rule or his take on Augustus and the role he played in the civil war. Similarly, the two historians did not see eye to eye on Augustus' acts as *princeps*. In other words, and as pointed out by Manuwald, Dio did not reproduce Tacitus' attitude towards Augustus in his analysis and reconstruction of the historical narrative in the *Roman History*. But this does not mean that Dio did not read and then disagree with what Tacitus had to say about Augustus' route to power or the kind of reign he introduced. One element that could suggest that Dio read at least the early chapters of the *Annals* is the way in which, in his closing remarks on the reign of Augustus, Dio addresses each of the points of criticism raised by Tacitus.[49]

Dio's justification of Octavian's role in the civil war and his later significance as *princeps* still comes across not just as an adaptation of Augustus' official version but as part of a more nuanced, multifaceted analysis of the political situation in Rome before and in the years after the civil wars that followed Caesar's death.[50] In that light, Dio and his explanation of Octavian's actions seem to be a response either to Tacitus' opening chapters of the *Annals* or to the critical portrait of Augustus that Tacitus refers to in his comparison of the two views on Augustus that were available as he started writing the *Annals* (*Ann.* 1.9–10).[51] Even if Dio criticizes some of Octavian's acts in the civil wars or how he as *princeps* at times found it difficult to manage his temper, what we get from his hand is still a rather vigorous justification of Augustus, his political goals, and how he acted as the considerate monarch anxious to do what was in the best interests of the Romans and their subjects.[52] Rome's first *princeps*

49 Tac. *Ann.* 1.10.7; Cass. Dio 56.45.3. See also Swan 2004, 350; Manuwald 1979, 140–141, 150. For a thorough discussion of the connection between Dio's conclusion on the life of Augustus and Tacitus' opening of Book 1 of the *Annals*, see Manuwald 1979, 140–141. On Tacitus and Dio using the same source, see Manuwald 1979, 161. For the discussion of whether Dio knew Tacitus' *Annales* see also Goodyear 1972, 166–167; Swan 2004, 345. On the divergences in Tacitus' and Dio's views and how that divergence suggests shared sources rather than dependency, see Devillers 2016, 240.

50 Rich 1990, 14.

51 Manuwald 1979, 161.

52 For a discussion of how Dio is not trying to soften his portrait of Augustus and his acts during the civil wars, see Manuwald 1979, 273–274, and Swan 2014, 17. On how Dio chose the most positive version of Octavian's behaviour in the civil war, see Gowing 1992, 92. For how Dio's criticism of the civil war years and of Augustus personality, see Markov 2019, 284–285, 291–293. Markov points to how Dio is pragmatic in finding ways to explain Augustus' acts and therefore also justify his behaviour both during the civil and after as Rome first monarch since the regal period. See also Rich 1989, 89, 101–102 on how

was at times brutal and manipulative, and his years as triumvir show the worst side of human nature. Yet, by introducing monarchical rule, Dio's Augustus removed the threat of factions and provided the peace and stability that his fellow citizens yearned for; by punishing Caesar's murderers, the young triumvir put an end to the tyranny of Rome's ambitious elite, all in the best interests of his people. These thoughts are most apparent at 56.43–44 in the concluding remarks on Augustus' life when Dio praises Rome's first *princeps* for all the good he had done for the Romans and celebrates how he had saved both the city and its people by introducing a form of government free of competition but with the right to speak freely.

Dio's version stands in opposition to the view Tacitus offers of how Augustus, the tyrant, fought the civil war and manipulated the people and the Senate to secure supreme rule for himself. Dio dedicates a considerable part of his coverage of the civil wars and the reign of Augustus to showing why the new monarch organized his rule in the way he did. There are elements in Dio's text that resonate with the pro-Augustan view to which Tacitus refers (*Ann*. 1.9). Yet, we notice that Dio goes several steps further both in his analysis of the role Augustus played in Roman politics and in the conclusion he offers when he claims that those of the Romans who remembered the years of the civil war were able to see the bigger picture and recognized not only that Augustus had done much good for the city and its people, but also that extreme times called for extreme actions (56.44). In a few sentences, Dio presents his readers with his belief that civil war was an unfortunate but occasionally necessary step to save the state from the threat of factional struggles that had gradually weakened Rome.[53]

Dio's coverage of Augustus comes across as ambitious and deliberate, rather than an attempt to simply reproduce an existing pro-Augustan tradition, whether it was the official Julio-Claudian version or later positive perceptions of Augustus. It should come as little surprise that Dio relied on contemporary or near-contemporary sources to write the books on the civil war and the reign of Augustus.[54] As pointed out by Manuwald, Dio held both positive and negative opinions about Augustus – his behavior and the form of government he introduced, for example – and these views were reflected in Dio's source material. But Dio also seems to have had a strong opinion of Augustus' significance as

Dio favours Augustus and allows the positive aspects of his rule override the points of criticism.

53 Madsen 2019b, 472–475.

54 Manuwald 1979, 167.

the man who saved the Romans, which the historian may well have formed independently from reading several different sources.

One reason why Tacitus and Dio saw the Age of Augustus and the monarchical form of government differently stems from the times during which they lived, the political climates in which their texts were written, and the two senators' different experiences in Roman politics. Tacitus lived to see the fall of a dynasty and the reasonably peaceful introduction of a new, seemingly more positive political climate in which Nerva was chosen by the senators and Trajan was adopted from among what could be said to have been the most experienced and deserving men in the Senate. Even if Tacitus lived to see Hadrian's controversial succession and experienced the brutality with which he pushed opposition aside, which may have sparked his reservations about the Principate, the Rome he lived in and the emperors whose rule he lived under were less chaotic compared to the fifty years from Commodus' accession in 180 to the reign of Alexander Severus.[55]

Dio, for his part, started working on his *Roman History* shortly after Roman troops had fought two civil wars with heavy casualties and in a period when politicized trials were once again used as tools to terrorize the Senate.[56] In the late second and early third centuries, politics were in many ways not unlike what they had been in the age of the dynasts in the late Republic when men of power and military resources superseded the state and fought each other and the Senate to win supreme rule in order to fulfill their own ambitions. The acts of Didius Julianus, who bribed the Praetorian Guard to support him as emperor (74[73].11–12), or Septimius Severus, who on his way to power invaded Italy and started the civil war against Niger and Albinus, may have been different in scale compared to the wars in the Late Republic and did not cause the political system itself to collapse. Yet, the wars and instability in Rome placed the political system and the elite under considerable stress.

Unlike Pliny and Tacitus, Dio holds no illusions that the senators would ever be able to administer a real share in the rule in the sense that they as a group would have a say in the decision-making process. He understood this based on his first-hand experiences in Rome – namely, the death of Pertinax, the accession of Julianus to the throne, and the wars between Severus, Niger, and Albinus. These conflicts were motivated by personal ambition. Similarly,

55 For Tacitus' description of the less successful adoption of Piso, see Tac. *Hist*. 1.15–19. See also Damon 2003, 136–137. Zecchini 2016.

56 For Dio's description of the civil war between Severus, Niger, and Albinus, see 76[75].4.1; 76[75].6. See also Birley 1988, 121–128; Campbell 2005, 4–6. For how the Senate was once again placed under pressure, see Cass. Dio 76[75].7–8.

as Dio has Maecenas discuss, our historian feared that open or less tightly regulated recruitment of magistrates and commanders would lead to new scenes of irrational competition among candidates, which would eventually lead to new civil wars like those in the 190s (52.20.2–3).

5 Dio's Ideal Monarchy

Compared to Dio Chrysostom, Pliny and Tacitus, Cassius Dio holds a middle ground between a traditional Greek understanding of monarchy – in which the king, respecting the gods and with the support of a number of hand-picked advisors, enjoyed absolute and undisputed powers – and the views found in the writings of Pliny and Tacitus, in which the senators were intended to have some share in what would still be monarchical rule. Whereas in Dio Chrysostom's *Kingship Orations*, the legitimacy of the king rested not on any specific political institutions but rather on his qualities as a just and god-fearing ruler who treated his subjects with respect and the love as a father, Pliny and Tacitus saw the best form of monarchical rule as one in which the senators were brought into the decision-making process. Pliny's praise of Trajan for encouraging the senators to assume the responsibility of government, as we saw above, and Tacitus' criticisms, on the one hand, of Augustus for taking away the incentive to seek influence and, on the other, of the senators for giving up too easily testify to differences in the conception of government.

There are several explanations for why Cassius Dio suggests an alternative form of monarchy where the role of the Senate was to act as the emperor's loyal advisors without political initiative of their own. One is the fear of civil war, which, even if he found a way to justify Octavian's war against Caesar's murderers and later against Antony, Dio believed should be avoided. Another reason why Dio suggests a more autocratic form of monarchical rule brings us to the paradox of why Dio would promote a form of constitution in which emperors were given enhanced powers at a time when one despotic emperor followed another. What may at first come across as support for a form of constitution in which the senators were largely left without any real influence on the political process suggests that Dio did have higher ambitions for himself and his peers than political stability and the right to express their concerns freely.[57]

As we saw above, Dio left no room for senators to pursue individualistic ambitions and did not believe that the Senate should be allowed any initiative in making and implementing laws, or, for that matter, in the selection

57 Jones 2016, 113–114.

and appointment of magistrates and military commanders (52.20.2–3). Yet, in how Dio pictures the ideal form of monarchical rule, the influence of the Senate would still be significant even if history shows that role of the senators had to be of a more indirect nature than it was in the age of the Republic. In his coverage of the emperors of the late first and early second centuries, Dio suggests that the most stable form of rule was when Rome was ruled by men of mature years who had solid political and military credentials. Such an ideal had proven largely unobtainable in the Julio-Claudian dynasty as well as under the Flavians. In the account of Nerva's adoption of Trajan, though, Dio praises the old emperor for choosing his successor from outside his own family, valuing skills and human qualities over familial relations and ethnic origins (68.4.1–2). Trajan is celebrated for being just, indifferent to rumors, and free from envy but happy to recognize the successes of others; and Dio notes how Trajan, as a man in his 40s, was at his prime – strong and experienced with all his faculties working at their best (68.6.2–4).

In what is left of the books on imperial Rome, which for the most part has come down to us in Xiphilinus' excerpts, Dio never explicitly states that adoptive succession was the only way forward to ensure that Rome and the empire were governed by competent and qualified men. The favorable portraits of Nerva and Trajan, the ways they exercised their power, their characters, and their political and military qualities all show the reader why they were the right kind of emperor. Similarly, Hadrian, whose accession to the throne as Trajan's adopted heir was dubious at best, is praised for his administrative skills, for how he disciplined the soldiers, and for taking the necessary steps to ensure that the practice of adopting the successor from among the most qualified senators was continued (69.9; 69.20–21).[58]

Also, again in the version offered to us by Xiphilinus, Dio offers a series of examples to show how young emperors who followed in the footsteps of their fathers or other male relatives were not sufficiently competent to govern Rome or the empire as sole ruler. They were not committed to the task and made little if any effort to serve Rome and the empire to the best of their ability. Instead, men like Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Commodus, and Caracalla are described as primarily interested in the pomp and luxury of the imperial lifestyle, or as too paranoid and afraid to cooperate with the senators and use their advice and experience in order to make better decisions.[59] Nor were most of them seen as sufficiently committed to upholding the balance between absolute rule and

58 Davenport & Mallan 2014, 642–643.

59 On Caligula' eccentric lifestyle, see 59.10.7 and 59.22.3–4. For Dio's criticism of Nero's cruelty and indifference to his obligation as sole ruler, see 61[61].4–5. On Commodus'

benefiting from the experience and wisdom that was available in the Senate. To Dio, whether an emperor was tyrannical or legitimate depended largely on his ability to be open to the advice of the senators and on his qualities as a just, competent, and dedicated ruler committed to doing his best, implementing laws that were carefully considered together with members of the Senate and appointing the most qualified men for the most important military and administrative posts.[60]

According to Dio, the senators should not be given any direct influence on decisions; they should never be allowed to propose or pass laws on their own initiative or have the right to block the emperor. But as members of the imperial ruling elite, they were to be given key functions both in the political process as men of experience ready to share their wisdom and in the day-to-day administration of the empire as governors in the provinces. Also, it was from among the most competent senators that the new emperor was ideally chosen. That would increase the possibility that the emperor would be a man with years of experience.[61] It was the emperor in power who was to choose his successor – this was the only way to avoid the damaging competition that Dio, with Thucydides and Sallust, believed was an inescapable part of human nature. But as pointed out by Davenport and Mallan, Dio offers the impression that Hadrian conferred with the foremost men of the Senate before the decision was made public.[62]

The version of second-century Rome that Dio offers is, of course, an illusion. In this respect, it is worth noting that Dio would have known that from Trajan onwards, the emperors were, in fact, related to each other. Moreover, in what we have of Dio's text, he does not mention that the emperor should be particularly keen on including the Senate in his decision-making process, which stands in contrast to Dio's celebration of Vespasian and Nerva for their consultation of the Senate in all matters. It is true that the surviving text on Trajan's reign is short, so it is possible that Dio did show Trajan listening to senatorial advice. Hadrian may have been a good administrator and firm general, but he fell out with the Senate after using force in order to secure supreme rule. Marcus Aurelius, another of Dio's favorites, abolished the idea of adopting

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interests in gladiatorial games, see 73[72].17–18. For Dio's remarks on how Caracalla humiliated the senators in Nicomedia, see 78[77].17.3–4.

60 Ando 2016, 573–576.

61 For the description of how Vespasian and Nerva both took advice from the Senate and included their council in their decisions, see 65.10.4–6 and 68.1–2. For how Dio believed Trajan was physically at his prime and fit to rule when adopted by Nerva, see 68.6.3. See also how Hadrian is praised for ensuring military discipline at 69.9.4–6.

62 Davenport & Mallan 2014, 642–643.

the successor from the Senate when he left the throne to Commodus, whom the old emperor knew was without the skills or the personal qualities needed to follow in his footsteps.

Still, by focusing on the principle of adopting one's successor from among the most qualified senators, Dio offers a solution with the potential to solve the two dilemmas that had challenged Roman politics since at least the age of the dynasts: how to allow the senators a say in the decision-making process without reopening the destabilizing competition among them, and how to ensure that the emperor had the right qualifications and the opportunity to act freely without any legal ties to the Senate or the assemblies. In Dio's version, it was Augustus who created a form of monarchy in which he would welcome all the advice he could get from the senators but made the decisions himself. But it was not until the late first century and the ascension of Nerva that the empire's political elite had finally managed to push the family dynasties out of the way and find their way back to the center of power.

The emperor's power was above the law, but he was also a senator, and so too was his successor as long as the practice of adoption was upheld. Dio would trade any direct influence on the decision-making process for a higher degree of stability and a reduced risk of internal strife and civil war, just as he was prepared to accept the reign of poorly qualified sole rulers over free competition among members of the elite and any form of government where the people were allowed a say in the legislative process.[63] Yet, the best form of monarchical rule was still rooted in the Senate. The emperor was to be chosen from among the senators and was to listen to the advice from his former peers; the senators were to carry out the empire's administrative and military tasks, following through on the decisions that the emperor had made in consultation with the senators either in plenary session or in the smaller council.[64] When, in Dio's ideal world, the senators did not assume any direct role in the decisions that were being made or have a say in the selection of the most important magistrates, military commanders, or, for that matter, of the emperor, it was again because human nature would dictate that these processes would lead to competition and factions, and eventually in violence in pursuit of personal goals or preventing others another from reaching theirs.

63 Cass. Dio 44.2.2–3.

64 See Maecenas' advice on how Octavian was to choose the empire's best men to serve as senators and from them select the magistrates and military commanders he needed (52.19–20).

6 Conclusion

Seen as a whole, the political thought in Dio's *Roman History* is more sophisticated and has more layers than he has been given credit for. Based on Thucydides' thoughts on realism and how greed, envy, and the urge for recognition would always dominate human behavior, Dio offers an analysis of how Roman politics developed from the foundation of Rome to the moment Dio left the city behind. But he also offers a solution to some of the problems that had challenged Roman politics practically since the formation of the Republic at the end of the sixth century BCE. By emphasizing the potential of the practice of adopting the next emperor in line from among the most qualified men in the Senate, Dio offers a way in which the political process was still tied to the members of the empire's elite but in a manner in which the risk of civil strife and war between citizens was significantly reduced. Compared to Pliny and Tacitus, Dio benefited from hindsight. The two Latin senators had died in the years before and after, respectively, the death of Trajan, so that Tacitus lived long enough to have experienced the rather troubling accession of Hadrian first-hand from the benches in the Senate. But time is not the only factor here. Neither Pliny nor Tacitus feared that competition among members of the political elite would destabilize the state and did not, to the same degree as Dio, draw on Thucydides and the idea of realism.

Consequently, the two Latin authors do not deliver a solution to the dilemma between political participation and the need to choose who should hold which posts or find a way to protect Rome against internal strife and civil wars. Nor do they offer any real answer to the question of how Rome was to integrate the empire's political elite in the political process. Where Dio saw a need for precautions and legal boundaries, Pliny and Tacitus both relied on the assumption that the Romans would learn from history even if the latter recommended modesty and recognition of how the power was ultimately in the hands of the emperor. In their writing, there is the hope that it would be possible to uphold a form of monarchy in which the emperors would share their powers with members of the empire's political elite by offering the Senate decisive influence on the decision-making process and on the administration of the empire and even a share in the rule that would allow them to fulfill one of their main purposes in life – to serve the Roman state to the best of their ability and so earn the honors that followed. There is optimism here, in Pliny's *Panegyricus* and Tacitus' earlier works, that emperors would continue to collaborate and include the senators in their reigns despite the fact that they were above the law; there is also a confidence that members of the political elite would continue to live their political life in moderation.

Dio had less faith in humanity and the voluntary contracts between ambitious members of the political establishment. His pessimism was no doubt the product of his own experience in Roman politics in the late second and early third centuries, but it was also and probably even more driven by his thoughts on realism and the flaws of human nature as laid out both by Thucydides and by Sallust. The pessimistic Dio maintains throughout his text that in the end, only one man was to make the decisions. It was his responsibility that new laws were implemented, and he had to be the law. But it was also his responsibility to make sure that the decisions made were as informed as possible. He was the one to ensure that no senators were prosecuted unjustly, just as it was he alone who chose the best magistrates and military commanders. The senators, for their part, had to come to terms with the fact that their role had to be advisory. But in the ideal form of monarchical rule in which the next emperor in line was chosen by the current emperor from among the most qualified men in the Senate, they could embrace the fact that the emperor was a former peer who would be more likely to represent their interests and values than someone who came to power through dynastic succession. Ultimately, even if it was an elusive dream to the vast majority in the Senate, Rome's senators could hope that they too would one day be the one selected for adoption to become the next emperor of Rome.

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CHAPTER 4

Monarchy as "True Democracy" in Cassius Dio and the Second Sophistic Authors: Irony, Utopia, or Ideal?

Konstantin V. Markov

Aelius Aristides (*Or.* 26.38–39, 60 Keil), Flavius Philostratus (*VA* 5.35) and Cassius Dio (52.14.3–5) each have passages of their works where they refer to the power of the Roman emperors as "the rule of the people" or "democracy" (δημοκρατία), either in the first person or via characters in their works. This phenomenon has been analyzed in detail by Starr. In his opinion, the views of these authors are much alike. All of them consider the Rome of their time as "the perfect democracy" – in other words, a state that takes into account the interests of almost all its citizens.[1] This he considers to be one of the examples of the erosion of the essence of the concept "democracy" in Hellenistic (and later) times, when not only the direct rule of the people but also any power, except for pure monarchies, could be referred to as democracy.[2]

This perception of Imperial Rome as a "perfect democracy" cannot in Starr's view be seen as an evolution of Polybius' version of a mixed constitution, or, to be more precise, his idea of the democratic element provided by popular assemblies because in the former case the people's participation in governing and particularly lawmaking is excluded.[3] The conception presented by the

1 Starr 1952, 12–16. The present article is a revised translation of Markov, K.V. (2013). "Единовластие как «подлинная демократия» в трудах греческих авторов времен второй софистики: ирония, иллюзия, утопия или идеал?", *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii = Journal of Ancient History* 3: 52–74. This study has been financially supported by the Russian Science Foundation, project No. 20-18-00374. I am grateful to Adam Kemezis, Colin Bailey, Beatrice Poletti, and Carsten Hjort Lange for comments on the previous draft of this chapter.

2 According to Polybius, for example, the nature of monarchy differs from all other forms of government that are referred to as monarchies here: τῶν δὲ πραγμάτων ἐναντίαν φύσιν ἐχόντων τοῖς βασιλεῦσι καὶ ταῖς δημοκρατίαις (Polyb. 22. 8. 6). See Larsen 1945, 88–91; Naf 1998, 553. Besides, it has been suggested that, in Imperial times, the concept δημοκρατία could be comprehended not as the rule "of the people" but "over the people" or "via the people". For this, see Carsana 1990, 87; Canfora 2006, 13–14.

3 However, Aelius Aristides (*Or.* 26.90) and Cassius Dio (56.43.4) appear to be familiar with the idea of Rome as a mixed constitution, though, as we will see, they might represent and comprehend it in different ways. For the impact of the ancient theories of mixed constitution

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three authors has instead been characterized as a product of the "Golden age" of the Antonines when the Hellenic provinces were experiencing economic and cultural recovery, and the Roman Empire was perceived by the Greeks as the embodiment of justice, law, and order. "Justice" does not necessarily imply the equality of all citizens. Everyone occupies their proper place in society, with senators finding themselves in the most privileged position. Based on this, Starr suggests that "the perfect democracy was quite in keeping with and perhaps grew out of the old senatorial concept of liberty as dependent upon the authority of an upper class pre-eminent in dignity,"[4] which means it is close in origin to a conception which combined *principatus ac libertas*, such as was popular in senatorial circles (Plin. *Pan*. 2–4; 24–25; 51–54; Tac. *Ann.* 1.4.1; *Agr.* 3.1).[5] Therefore, according to Starr, the identification of the state system of the Roman Empire with democracy was devoid of political significance and appears to be "lip service to old shibboleths like *libertas* and δημοκρατία."[6]

Recent decades have seen a number of works that deal with the issues highlighted by Starr, with some scholars developing his conclusions. It has been suggested that the concept of the *demos* acquired an aristocratic connotation, while the identification of the Empire with "democracy" reflected the political expectations of the predominantly higher strata of Roman society and primarily of the senators, who favored the status quo established under the Antonines and advocated its maintenance under the Severans.[7] Scholars

on Dio's treatment of the Augustan Principate, see Carsana 1990, 15; Coltelloni-Trannoy 2016, 562; Madsen in this volume).

4 Starr 1952, 15.

5 For this conception in general, see Wirszubski 1950, 160–171; Hammond 1963, 93–113. For the late republican "optimate" tradition of comprehending and representing the liberty of commonwealth as preserved primarily by a mixed and balanced constitution, see Arena 2013, 81–115.

6 Starr 1952, 16; cf. Ameling 1997, 2472–2495.

7 For a general analysis of the usage of the concept 'democracy' in imperial times, see Sordi 2001, 3–8. Some scholars focus specifically on Cassius Dio. For example, Espinosa Ruiz developed Starr's idea that the identification of the Imperial government with "democracy" could have Roman roots and is comparable to Tacitus' considerations on Nerva, in contrast to his predecessors, creating opportunities for a combination of *principatus* and *libertas* (*Agr*. 3.1). According to his observations, the term δημοκρατία has two meanings in Cassius Dio's *Roman History*: It denotes, on the one hand, the legal concept of *res publica* (state, public good) and, on the other, the moral and ethical category of *libertas* (freedom). Therefore, in Dio's view, democracy is compatible with the imperial power when the *princeps* ensures the maintenance of the *res publica* and *libertas* (Espinosa Ruiz 1982, 59–60). Another point of view is presented by Horst, according to whom, Dio via Maecenas argues for the creation of a certain "parity of power structures," which involved the active participation of senators in public administration (Horst 2010, 208; Horst 2011, 286).

following Starr regard the ideas of Greek intellectuals as more or less homogeneous and have even suggested that, since Aristides, Philostratus and Cassius Dio were favored by the emperors and all three addressed their considerations regarding the Empire as a "democracy" either to the rulers themselves or to members of the imperial families, all three of the passages at issue here can be considered manifestations of a single conception intended for the emperors and their confidants.[8]

Roberto similarly argues that Aelius Aristides and Cassius Dio had more or less uniform views of Imperial Rome as a "world democracy" for all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, with the head of the state ruling not as a despot but as the supreme magistrate. At the same time, the key point of this concept is the interaction of the ruler with the aristocracy (that is, the combination of "individual rule" and "elitism") and, mainly, the Greek civic elites as mediators between the emperor and the people.[9]

This is a brief survey of the scholarship on δημοκρατία and its ideological implications in the works of the authors of the second and third centuries. It should, however, be noted that the conclusions about the similarity of views of different authors are based mostly on the simple fact that the term δημοκρατία is applied to imperial Rome. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze in detail the source material and answer the following questions: What are the nuances and details of δημοκρατία as expressed by Aelius Aristides, Flavius Philostratus, and Cassius Dio? To what extent are those details similar? Were the three passages intended to be rhetorical with no correlation to the specific ideological and political contexts of their time, or do they correlate and engage with the political discourse of the Antonines and Severans? In order to answer these questions, we should carefully examine the contextual characteristics of the application of δημοκρατία in Aelius Aristides, Flavius Philostratus, and Dio Cassius. Presumably, this approach will advance our understanding of the three authors' discourses, whether they offer replication of official ideological clichés, the sincere glorification of Rome as a state ensuring "general welfare," aspirations of aristocrats masked by the idea of the people's welfare, or other ideas, as the case may be.

In a passage of the *Roman Oration*, which is usually thought to have been delivered before Emperor Antoninus Pius,[10] Aristides states that only the Romans rule free people because the governors are appointed to provinces

8 Panteleyev 2010, 478–479.

9 Roberto 2010, 23–31.

10 For the time of composition and the audience envisaged, see Oliver 1953, 886–887; Pavan 1962, 81–95; Bleicken 1966, 255; Vannier 1976, 497; Desideri 2007, 3.

after "the sortition process" (Aristid. *Or.* 26.36: ἐξ ἀρχαιρεσιῶν) and their major purpose is to protect the governed, not to turn them into slaves. Moreover, appeals to a higher court are easy to make and provincials "are ruled by the governors who are sent out, only in so far as they are content to be ruled"[11] (§37: τοσαῦτα ἄρχεσθαι τοὺς νῦν ὑπὸ τῶν πεμπομένων, ὁπόσα ἂν αὐτοῖς ἀρέσκῃ). This statement is followed by a rhetorical question: "Are not these advantages beyond every democracy of the past"[12] (§38: πῶς οὐν ταῦτα οὐκ ἐν τοῖς ἐπέκεινα πάσης δημοκρατίας)? According to Aristides, the second-century situation is better because the provincials are provided with an opportunity to appeal to a higher official, "another judge, a mighty one" (§38: δικαστής μέγας), whose power can be equally applied to people of different social standings, and, therefore, all appear to be equals in such a state (§39).

This part of Aristides' speech raises questions. What is the narrative purpose of comparing the Empire with "democracy"? What is ἐν τοῖς ἐπέκεινα πάσα δημοκρατία, and to which period does it belong? Oliver renders it in English as "the old 'Free Republic' of every people," but in a comment to this passage, he mentions some other possible readings ("democracy", in a broad meaning of the word; "republic" or "state, state system" as identical to the Latin *res publica*; the Old Republic, i.e., the republican period in Roman history), assuming that "a Greek of the same period might speak of the δημοκρατία of his city and mean, not exactly the democracy, but the old *libera res publica* which existed in the city before the Roman domination."[13] Indeed, as logically follows from the context, namely the comparison of Roman methods of administering the provinces with the Persian practices (§36) and the previous conditions of the provinces themselves (§38), πάσα δημοκρατία is not necessarily or exclusively the Roman Republic, but, rather "any democracy" and, primarily, the state system that existed in the Greek cities before they found themselves under the rule of the Romans. This interpretation is also supported by the comparison of Imperial rule with the power of "citizens of one city" in §36, as well as by the statement that in the past it was impossible to bring the local officials (jurors from the city/town's court) to justice (§38). Besides, in §90, the author distinguishes the Roman form of government from the tyrannies, monarchies, oligarchies and, of course, democracies that other states had had in the past, characterizing the Roman state as a fusion of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy.[14] Therefore,

11 Here and below Oliver's translation of *The Roman Oration* is employed.

12 Oliver's version is "the old 'Free Republic' of every people".

13 Oliver 1953, 920–921.

14 For Aristides following, apparently, the Polybian conception applied to the Roman Republic, see Fontanella 2008, 211–212. It should be noted that the similarity between the Aristides and Polybius' depictions of Rome as a mixed constitution is quite circumstantial,

it is quite plausible that the πάσης δημοκρατίας remark can be read as a claim of "the advantages of Roman rule over local sovereignty."[15] The question is to what extent such a claim coming from a representative of the Greek civic elite can be taken at face value, especially in the light of some recent ideas about the general ideological stance of the *Roman Oration*. This speech, delivered by the son of the priest of Olympian Zeus' temple in Hadrianoutherae,[16] not so long ago was considered by researchers as a manifestation of the obsequious loyalty of the Greek-speaking provincial elite to Rome.[17] It has, however, recently been suggested that the author's attitudes to the Roman state might be restrained (if not alienated).[18]

Such a change in the views of scholars arises, to some extent, from the emergence of new approaches to the interpretation of the works of the Second Sophistic authors. For instance, the sophists' performative political speeches might not have been intended for audiences to take at face value. Rather, subtexts might be included via the use of veiled formulations and allegories (ἐσχηματισμένον ἐν λόγῳ, *figurata elocutio*).[19] This concept of figurative speech is known to us from a number of sources, including ancient treatises on rhetoric.[20] These sources mention various techniques employed by the authors in order to convey their own point of view in a veiled form: "silence", "deviations", "irony" (expressed, in particular, in deliberately exaggerated praise), as well as a variety of *topoi* containing allusions to known subjects. Such "Aesopian language" employs ambiguity of wording and permits the possibility of multiple meanings of one and the same text.[21] This technique was used for reasons of safety and propriety, especially, as Demetrius notes, in speeches addressed to rulers (*Eloc.* 293). Therefore, recent scholarship characterizes Greek oratory of the second and third centuries CE as texts with complex semantic structures that can be read between the lines in at least some cases.[22] The *Roman Oration* has

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especially in regard to the role of the democratic element. Unlike Polybius, Aristides places primary emphasis not on the distribution of power amongst the institutional components of the state, but on the recognition of popular and senatorial interests by the imperial government (*Or.* 26.90).

15 Oliver 1953, 921.

16 For Aristides' background and biography, see Behr 1993, 1140–1233; Desideri 2007, 3–22.

17 Robert 1970, 16.

18 Vannier 1976, 497–506; Pernot 2008, 175–176, 189; Fontanella 2008, 7.

19 Pernot 2008, 185–188; Pernot 2011, 287–290.

20 Demetr. *Eloc.* 287–295; Quint. *Inst.* 9. 2.72–75; Hermog. *Inv.* 4. 13; *Meth.* 22; Apsines Περί ἐσχηματισμένων προβλημάτων; Ps.-Dion. Hal. *Rhet.* 8–9.

21 Ahl 1984, 174–208.

22 Chiron 2003, 223–254; Heath 2003, 81–105; Milazzo 2007, 46–125; Morgan 2006, 51–62; Pernot 2011, 283–290.

also been examined from this point of view. Having composed a speech which was presumably intended to glorify Rome, Aristides is nevertheless silent about the history and culture of the city, does not give any Roman names, and says nothing about Romulus, Scipio, Caesar or Augustus.[23] The author focuses on Roman rule and the framework of the imperial government but says nothing about how the Empire was formed. Rome is represented as an external force whose mission is primarily to ensure the welfare of the provinces, especially the Hellenic part of the Empire, which is singled out by Aristides as a recipient of the emperor's care in a number of passages (§94–96). Moreover, additional controversies have been detected in Aristides' works.[24] In his Panathenaic speech, he claims that Athens is almost as happy as in the days when it ruled over Greece. Under the current government, which is the best and greatest in many respects, Athens again prevails over all Greeks, and no one would wish to return to the old days (*Or.* 1.332–335). Aristides, thus, admits that the situation has changed under the Romans, and it would seem that Athens really should be happy because Rome relieved it of all the inconveniences and left only the benefits. Nevertheless, a more nuanced interpretation of the passage (especially *Or.* 1.335) has been suggested: The Athenians are "almost" (μικρού δεῖν), but not completely, happy and it is "not so easy to wish" to return to the old times (ὥστε μή ῥᾳδίως ἄν τινα αὐτῇ τἀρχαῖα ἀντὶ τῶν παρόντων συνεύξασθαι). Such ambiguity, according to Pernot, is an example of figurative speech. Pernot also points to another similar passage, in which Aristides, contrasting contemporary reality with the era of Plato and Aristotle, says: "If someone should be of such a nature so that he does not easily appear before the people with his oratory and engage in political disputes, since he sees that the government is now differently constituted …"[25] (Aristid. *Or.* 2.430: εἰ τοίνυν τις καὶ τοιοῦτος ἐγγένοιτο οἷος ῥητορικὴν ἔχων εἰς μὲν δήμους ῥᾳδίως μὴ εἰσιέναι, μηδὲ περὶ πολιτείας ἀμφισβητεῖν ὁρῶν ἑτέρως ἔχοντα τὰ πράγματα …). The passage can be interpreted in two different ways. First, the citizens may only "reluctantly" deliver (ῥᾳδίως μή εἰσιέναι) public speeches or take part in political debates, because "the situation" (τὰ πράγματα) is different; second, it may not be easy to deliver a public speech because of the "state system" (τὰ πράγματα).

Now, returning to *Or.* 26.36–39, we find the term δημοκρατία accompanied by the concepts of "freedom" (ἐλευθερία) (§36) and "equality" (ἰσότης) (§39), which fits traditions of Greek political thinking well. But both concepts are in

23 Pernot 2011, 294–295. For further decoding of the figured implications of *The Roman Oration*, see Jarratt 2016, 217–229.

24 Pernot 2008, 185–188.

25 Transl. by Behr.

fact treated as belonging to the new rather than the old version of "democracy" (§38–39):

> οὔκουν ἐκεῖ ἔξεστι μετὰ τὴν ἐν τῇ πόλει ψῆφον ἐνεχθεῖσαν ἐλθεῖν ἄλλο σε οὐδ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἄλλους δικαστὰς, ἀλλὰ στέργειν ἀνάγκη τοῖς ἐγνωσμένοις, εἰ μή τις ἐστὶ μικρὰ πόλις, ὥστε προσδεῖσθαι δικαστῶν ὑπερορίων.... παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν, ἢκαὶ διώκοντα μὴ κρατήσαντα, μηδὲ τῷ νενικῆσθαι: ἀλλὰ μένει δικαστὴς ἕτερος μέγας, ὃν οὔποτε οὐδὲν ἐκφεύγει τῶν δικαίων: κἀν ταῦθα δὴ **πολλὴ καὶ εὐσχήμων ἰσότης** μικροῦ πρὸς μέγαν καὶ ἀδόξου πρὸς ἔνδοξον καὶ πένητος δὴ πρὸς πλούσιον καὶ γενναῖον ἀγεννοῦς, καὶ τὸ τοῦ Ἡσιόδου συμβαίνει,
>
> ῥεῖα μὲν γὰρ βριάει, ῥέα δὲ βριάοντα χαλέπτει
>
> οὗτος ὁ δικαστής τε καὶ ἡγεμὼν, ὅπως ἂν τὸ δίκαιον ἄγῃ, ὥσπερ πνεῦμα ἐννηὶ, οὐ δή που πλουσίῳ μὲν μᾶλλον, πένητι δὲ ἧττον χαριζόμενόν τε καὶ παραπέμπον, ἀλλ᾽ ὅτῳ γένοιτο ἀεὶ, τοῦτον ὁμοίως ὠφελοῦν.
>
> For [under Government by the People] it is not possible to go outside after the verdict has been given in the city's court nor even to other jurors, but, except in a city so small that it has to have jurors from out of town, one must ever be content with the local verdict ... ⟨deprived⟩ undeservedly, or, as plaintiff, not getting possession even after a favourable verdict. But now in the last instance, there is another judge, a mighty one, whose comprehension no just claim ever escapes. There is *abundant and beautiful equality* of the humble with the great and of the obscure with the illustrious, and, above all, of the poor man with the rich and of the commoner with the noble, and the word of Hesiod comes to pass, "For he easily exalts, and the exalted he easily checks," namely this judge and *princeps* as the justice of the claim may lead, like a breeze in the sails of a ship, favouring and accompanying, not the rich man more, the poor man less, but benefiting equally whomsoever it meets.

"Freedom", consequently, means the opportunity to appeal to a supreme Judge against the decisions of local authorities (§37), while the essence of "abundant and beautiful equality" is the common accountability before "the judge and princeps" who can easily destroy anyone.[26] Here, Aristides deals with the

26 Similarly, in §31, Aristides mentions the governors of the province who behave like obedient subjects because of the "fear" (φόβος) that the ruler instills in them. Here, the idea, which is delivered via the quotation from Hesiod, appears to be a way of refraining from a direct evaluation of imperial power. It should be noted that it is depicted in a slightly different light in §90: The ruler, as a part of a mixed constitution, is the ephor and prytanis

issues that were very important to him and many of his countrymen, but the discourse itself indicates the possibility of ironic connotations for the author's praise of the new model of "freedom" and "equality". The ironic perception of the author's contemporary realities might not exclude, however, recognition of the inevitability and inviolability of Roman power, as well as emphasizing the strength of the imperial power as able to defend the interests of the elites of provincial cities.

However, one more detail should be mentioned. The rhetorical question of "the old days of universal democracy" is presented in the context of Aristides' argument that the possibility of appeal has a positive impact on the nature of the power of the governors. It is likely that this peculiarity reflects the specific political thinking of the author as a representative of the elites of Greek cities. According to Shtaerman, the main feature of the political ideal characteristic of this social group was the autonomy of cities, combined with a strong imperial power able to defend the interests of the municipal elite, especially in case of confrontation of the latter with mighty landowners from among the senators.[27] Perhaps that is why, in the passage quoted above, Aristides emphasizes equality of all before the emperor, regardless of social standing. However, one does not exclude the other. Aristides, comparing the past of Greece with his own times, could really express irony and restraint about the Empire, but at the same time, realizing the inevitability and inviolability of Roman power, could also pay attention primarily to those aspects that seemed to him the most important. Aristides not only compares Imperial Rome with democracies of past times but also refers to the Roman Empire as "a universal democracy" (§60):

> καὶ οὔτε θάλαττα διείργει τὸ μὴ εἶναι πολίτην οὔτε πλῆθος τὰς ἐν μέσῳ χώρας, οὐδ᾽ Ἀσία καὶ Εὐρώπη διῄρηται ἐνταῦθα: πρόκειται δ᾽ ἐν μέσῳ πᾶσι πάντα: ξένος δ᾽ οὐδεὶς ὅστις ἀρχῆς ἢ πίστεως ἄξιος, **ἀλλὰ καθέστηκε κοινὴ τῆς γῆς δημοκρατία ὑφ᾽ ἑνὶ τῷ ἀρίστῳ ἄρχοντι καὶ κοσμητῇ,** καὶ πάντες ὥσπερ εἰς κοινὴν ἀγορὰν συνίασι τευξόμενοι τῆς ἀξίας ἕκαστοι.
>
> Neither sea nor intervening continent are bars to citizenship, nor are Asia and Europe divided in their treatment here. In your empire, all paths are open to all. No one worthy of rule or trust remains an alien, *but a civil community of the World has been established as a Free Republic under one,*

who presides over all. For Aristides' depiction of Rome as an ideal constitution in this passage, see Stertz 1994, 1248–1270.

27 Shtaerman 1957, 291–292.

> *the best, ruler and teacher of order*; and all come together as into a common civic center, in order to receive each man his due.

Here, as in §38, the word δημοκρατία has been translated as "Free Republic". Alternatively, Bowie suggests that the word should be understood as "state" by analogy with the term *res publica*, which might serve as an explanation for the compatibility of "democracy" with a monarchical rule.[28] However, Oliver had already considered such an interpretation as less probable, arguing that the more neutral κοινή πολιτεία would have been more suitable for denoting a "world empire". Therefore, in such a context, Aristides could be using the term δημοκρατία specifically to emphasize the characteristic features of the Roman state, such as freedom and equality.[29] A similar interpretation is presented by Roberto, who believes that §60 is the key to understanding the whole oration. Aristides refers to the Roman Empire as "universal democracy" in order to highlight the value of the institution of citizenship for uniting different peoples under the rule of Rome. According to Roberto, Aristides regarded the unification of different lands and peoples as the historical vocation of Rome and the basis of its power, which was a reflection of attitudes of the provincial Greek elites, who had opportunities for receiving Roman citizenship and becoming equestrians and senators. Thus, the idea of Aristides, according to Roberto, is the idea of interaction of the Roman authorities with the provincial nobility.[30]

Nevertheless, with careful reading, the author's attitude to Roman citizenship may not seem unambiguous. In §59, Aristides notes that the Romans divided the population of the Empire into two groups:

> τὸ μὲν χαριέστερόν τε καὶ γενναιότερον καὶ δυνατώτερον πανταχοῦ πολιτικὸν ἢ καὶ ὁμόφυλον πᾶν ἀπεδώκατε, τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ὑπήκοόν τε καὶ ἀρχόμενον.
>
> [Y]ou have everywhere appointed to your citizenship, or even to kinship with you, the better part of the world's talent, courage, and leadership, while the rest you recognized as a league under your hegemony.

"Universal democracy" is not for all the population, but mostly for those who are "worthy of rule or trust" (§60: ὅστις ἀρχῆς ἢ πίστεως ἀξιος). From §63 we

28 Bowie 2009, 230.

29 Oliver 1953, 927.

30 Roberto 2010, 27. For Aristides' vision of Roman/Imperial citizenship as "drawing on human excellence from every corner", with "excellence" being class-dependent, see Kemezis 2019, 92–93.

learn the word "Roman" means membership not in a city, but in a common nationality:

> οὐ γὰρ εἰς Ἕλληνας καὶ βαρβάρους διαιρεῖτε νῦν τὰ γένη, οὐδὲ γελοίαν τὴν διαίρεσιν ἀπεφήνατε αὐτοῖς πολυανθρωποτέραν τὴν πόλιν παρεχόμενοι ἢ ατὰ πᾶν, ὡς εἰπεῖν, τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν φῦλον, ἀλλ᾽ εἰς Ῥωμαίους τε καὶ οὐ Ῥωμαίους ἀντιδιείλετε.
>
> For the categories into which you now divide the world are not Hellenes and Barbarians, and it is not absurd,[31] the distinction which you made, because you show them a citizenry more numerous, so to speak than the entire Hellenic race. The division which you substituted is one into Romans and non-Romans.

Even if we admit that the category of Roman citizens happened to be highly numerous, the text of §63 shows the author's reserved attitude towards Roman citizenship. First, according to Oliver's comment, Aristides, in this case, paraphrases the words of Isocrates (*Paneg*. 50):

> καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὄνομα πεποίηκε μηκέτι τοῦ γένους ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας δοκεῖν εἶναι, καὶ μᾶλλον Ἕλληνας καλεῖσθαι τοὺς τῆς παιδεύσεως τῆς ἡμετέρας ἢ τοὺς τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως μετέχοντας.
>
> And (Athens) has made the name Hellenes seem no longer that of the race but of the intellect, and it is those sharing in our education rather than those sharing in our common nature who are called Hellenes.

This might be an allusion to the difference in criteria between Hellenic and Roman identities, i.e., upbringing and education on the one hand and service to Rome on the other. If so, the number of Roman citizens is not a reason for delight. Second, if in the *Roman Oration* Aristides praises the "new" division into "Romans" and "non-Romans", then in his other speeches, for example in praise of Cyzicus (*Or.* 27.32), the "old" division into Greeks and barbarians is mentioned as a matter of course. Moreover, in one of the *Sacred Tales*, Aristides mentions his search for guides from among the "barbarians" when traveling to Rome (*Or.* 48.61). Therefore, the former division of people (into Hellenes and barbarians) retained its relevance for him not only in the rhetorical sense but

31 An alternative translation of the epithet could be "ridiculous" or "ludicrous", i.e., something which causes laughter.

also at the level of ordinary thinking. Thus, his claim that the Romans divided the world into "Romans" and "non-Romans" might be more a statement of fact than sincere praise.

It can be assumed, therefore, that Aristides' arguments about democracy for those whom the Romans deem worthy of their citizenship, and the new division of people which "does not cause laughter" (§63), are a hint of Aristides' ironic perception of the Roman Empire: The inhabitants of the provinces, those who received the status of a Roman citizen, should sincerely admire the fact that they can call themselves "Romans", while the word "Hellenes" means little.

Let us now consider Philostratus' stance on the Empire as a democracy. As has been noted by Bowie,[32] the relevant passage in his *Life of Apollonius* (5.35.4) is similar to §60 of the *Roman Oration*:

> ὥσπερ γὰρ εἷς ἀρετῇ προὔχων μεθίστησι τὴν δημοκρατίαν ἐς τὸ ἑνὸς ἀνδρὸς τοῦ ἀρίστου ἀρχὴν φαίνεσθαι, οὕτως ἡ ἑνὸς ἀρχὴ πάντα ἐς τὸ ξυμφέρον τοῦ κοινοῦ προορῶσα δῆμός ἐστιν.
>
> For as a single man pre-eminent in virtue transforms a democracy into the guise of a government of single man who is the best, so the government of one man if it provides all-round for the welfare of the community, is a popular government.[33]

The passage belongs to a speech of Apollonius, who, in the presence of Vespasian, discusses with his traveling companions, Euphrates and Dio Chrysostom, what form of government is most preferable: democracy, oligarchy or sole rulership (5.32–36). There are different interpretations of this discussion. Knabe considers it as a sort of philosophical treatise reflecting what the author might know about the senatorial political agenda under the Flavians,[34] while others focus mostly on Apollonius' speech, and especially on his practical advice on rulership in §36[35] as a kind of political program of the provincial Greek elite.[36] Another part of the scholarship regards this text as

32 Bowie 2009, 230.

33 Transl. by Conybeare.

34 Knabe 1972, 38.

35 In fact, some of the instructions mentioned by Apollonius, including the strictness towards the emperor's two sons and the idea that the Greek provinces should be ruled by the Greek speaking governors, may be interpreted as allusions to the realities of the Severan era.

36 Swain 1998, 159; Flinterman 1993, 320; Shtaerman 1957, 289–290.

only a literary cliché modeled on a similar discussion from Herodotus' *History* (3.82), with no real program or ideology lurking behind it.[37]

The interpretation of Apollonius' speech is also closely connected with the problem of interpreting the general idea of Apollonius' biography. If Philostratus belonged to the inner circle of Julia Domna, and the narrative was addressed to this readership, could that fact affect, as Panteleyev has suggested,[38] the nature and content of the political ideas embedded in the speech of Apollonius? The main evidence for this issue is the author's introductory statement that he belonged to the circle of Julia Domna, who commissioned the work on Apollonius (1.3.1). It was a long standard among scholars to believe that Julia Domna created a sort of "literary salon" embracing the most eminent sophists, geometricians and philosophers of the time.[39] According to another point of view, the group might not necessarily have consisted of celebrities.[40] Moreover, as suggested by Whitmarsh, "the circle" mentioned by Philostratus might mean not specifically sophists but a relatively large group of Julia's friends and confidants. Whitmarsh also notes the lack of direct evidence for the connection between the *Apollonius* and the Severans' propaganda or political issues of the epoch, with the main emphasis in the *Apollonius* being placed on Greek literature, rhetoric and culture in general and the ties between the glorious past of Hellas and the country's cultural development in the imperial times.[41] Besides, it can be agreed with recent scholarship that the work was finished after Julia Domna's death, with a number of arguments being provided in favor of a date in the early 220s.[42] Thus, when Flavius Philostratus refers to Julia Domna as a sponsor of his work, he does not provide the reader with a full understanding of either the audience for which the work was intended or its ideological orientation, and, hence, does not allow us to assume a correlation between various political ideas that are reflected in *Life of Apollonius* and the ideology of the Roman emperors. But, on the other hand, even if one questions the historicity of Philostratus' words about the "commission" from a member of the ruling dynasty, the narrator, at least, represents his work as addressed to Julia Domna. Therefore, it would be quite natural for the reader to expect

37 Bowie 2009, 230. The same idea is developed by Vielberg (2016, 249–252) who regards Philostratus' depiction of the constitutional debates of 69 CE as a literary construction comparable with and, to some extent, modelled on Cicero's *De re publica*.

38 Panteleyev 2010, 479.

39 Münscher 1907, 477–478; Platnauer 1918, 144–145; Hemelrijk 2004, 122–126.

40 Bowersock 1969, 101–109; Flinterman 1993, 22–24.

41 Whitmarsh 2007, 33. For a wide range of Greek intellectuals as an audience envisaged by Apollonius, see Schirren 2009, 161–167.

42 Kemezis 2014, 297; Morgan 2009, 279.

at least some connection between such a narrative (especially in the sections devoted to Apollonius' engagement in Roman politics) and the paradigms of political thinking characteristic of the Severan period.[43]

Concerning the expression about "democracy", one should note that, in Apollonius' formulation, "popular government" (ἀρχὴ … δῆμος) is established under the authority of a ruler who cares about the common welfare. Consequently, unlike Aelius Aristides, Philostratus focuses not on the institutional factor, but on the impact of personality. In this respect, Philostratus' interpretation is somewhat similar to the above-mentioned arguments of Tacitus and Pliny about the combination of *principatus* and *libertas* (above, p. 110, n. 5) under the reign of an honorable ruler. As has been mentioned, this is what Starr supposed to be the basic explanation of the representation of autocracy as a democracy. However, there might be another explanation, which is connected to the third version of the identification of the Roman Empire with democracy provided by Cassius Dio.

Cassius Dio's *Roman History* in its final version was published most likely in the early 230s CE, that is, about a decade later than the *Life of Apollonius*.[44] Dio's identification of monarchy with democracy appears in the context, which is rather close to that of Flavius Philostratus, of a discussion about the best form of government that takes place between Agrippa and Maecenas in the presence of Octavian in 29 BCE (52.1.2–41.2). Maecenas is the advocate of autocracy. His speech is believed, not without reason,[45] to be a reflection of the views of Cassius Dio himself.[46] The speech provides a basic theoretical framework for the settlement of a monarchical state and social order (52.14.3–5):

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43 Kemezis 2014, 157.

44 Recent years have seen a revival of the discussion of when the bulk of Dio's work was written and published, with two main approaches to dating the *Roman History* remaining current. According to the "early" dating, Dio's narrative is a product of the reigns of Caracalla, Macrinus and, possibly, Elagabalus (Millar 1964, 28–30; Sordi 2000, 391–395; Lindholmer 2021), while the "late" version argues that Dio wrote his work under Severus Alexander (Letta 1979, 117–189; Barnes 1984, 240–255; Letta 2019, 163–180). In either case, Dio's own words about his initial plan to write to the point that would be permitted by Fortune (73[72].23.4–5) together with his reference to his appointment to Pannonia (presumably, in mid-220s) at 49.36.4 allow us to suggest that *Roman History* (even if there was a second, revised and extended, version) received its final shape no sooner than the late 220s (Markov 2008b, 142–154). For Dio finishing his work in the late 220s and early 230s, see Makhlayuk & Markov 2008, 43; Kemezis 2014, 282–282.

45 For the concordances between the speech of Maecenas and some of Dio's authorial expressions, see Kuhn-Chen 2002, 189; Reinhold 1988, 167; Hose 1994, 394. However, there is no direct evidence that Dio shared all the ideas expressed by his Maecenas.

46 For a relatively recent overview of modern scholarship on the discussion, see Kemezis 2014, 127.

διόπερ καὶ σὲ ἀξιῶ … τὴν διοίκησιν τῶν κοινῶν ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς ἀρίστοις προσθεῖναι, ἵνα βουλεύωσι μὲν οἱ φρονιμώτατοι, ἄρχωσι δὲ οἱ στρατηγικώτατοι, στρατεύωνται δὲ καὶ μισθοφορῶσιν οἵ τε ἰσχυρότατοι καὶ οἱ πενέστατο. οὕτω γὰρ τά τε ἐπιβάλλοντά σφισιν ἕκαστοι προθύμως ποιοῦντες, καὶ τὰς ὠφελίας ἀλλήλοις ἑτοίμως ἀντιδιδόντες, οὔτε τῶν ἐλαττωμάτων, ἐν οἷς καταδέουσί τινων, ἐπαισθήσονται, καὶ τὴν **δημοκρατίαν τὴν ἀληθῆ** τήν τε **ἐλευθερίαν τὴν ἀσφαλῆ** κτήσονται: ἐκείνη μὲν γὰρ ἡ τοῦ ὄχλου ἐλευθερία τοῦ τε βελτίστου δουλεία πικροτάτη γίγνεται καὶ κοινὸν ἀμφοῖν ὄλεθρον φέρει, αὕτη δὲ τό τε σῶφρον πανταχοῦ προτιμῶσα **καὶ τὸ ἴσον ἅπασι κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν** ἀπονέμουσα πάντας ὁμοίως εὐδαίμονας τοὺς χρωμένους αὐτῇ ποιεῖ.

Therefore, I ask you … to place the management of public affairs in the hands of yourself and the other best citizens, to the end that the business of deliberation may be performed by the most prudent and that of ruling by those best fitted for command, while the work of serving in the army for pay is left to those who are strongest physically and most needy. In this way, each class of citizens will zealously discharge the duties which devolve upon them and will readily render to one another such services as are due, and will thus be unaware of their inferiority when one class is at a disadvantage as compared with another, and all will gain *the true democracy and the freedom which does not fail*. For the boasted freedom of the mob proves in experience to be the bitterest servitude of the best element to the other and brings upon both common destruction; whereas this freedom of which I speak everywhere prefers for honour the men of prudence, awarding at the same time *equality to all according to their deserts*, and thus gives happiness impartially to all who enjoy this liberty.[47]

Employing the concept of "true democracy" (τὴν δημοκρατίαν τὴν ἀληθῆ) in this passage, Dio emphasizes that the ideal system he writes about is better than mere "democracy". The latter word is repeated throughout the discussion. It is also mentioned in the brief preface to the speeches (52.1.1–2), where Dio refers to the Roman Republic as δημοκρατία (52.1.1), which in Agrippa's speech is equated with *isonomia*. Making these concepts identical, Dio relies on the tradition of the Greek authors of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, in whose works *isonomia* is often used as a synonym for *demokratia*.[48] Thus, "true democracy" is not equal to *demokratia*. It implies the establishment of a social structure that is opposed to the democratic (i.e., republican) ideal in Agrippa's

47 Here and below, transl. by Cary, emphasis mine.
48 Reinhold 1988, 172.

speech. The essence of Maecenas' "true democracy" is to establish and maintain a certain social order, in which the top of the social hierarchy is occupied by those whom Dio calls "the best people."[49] One should pay attention to the fact that Dio, like Aelius Aristides, emphasizes "democracy", "freedom" and "equality", but the interpretation of these concepts is completely different. Aristides, as we mentioned, emphasizes the equality of all citizens under the power of the emperor, which can "elevate" and cast down "any person" (cf. Plin. *Pan. 65*). On the contrary, Maecenas prioritizes equality "according to distinction" (κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν), expressing, apparently, the opinion of the author himself, since, according to Dio, the essence of democracy is not to achieve equal rewards for everyone, but to receive rewards based on one's rank (6.23.5: τὰ κατ' ἀξίαν). In this way, the historian appears to be familiar with the concept of the so-called "geometric equality" or "equality according to worth," which one can find in Plato (*Rep.* 433b–435C; *Leg.* 757A–E; 744BC), Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1131A20–28, 1141B21 sq.; *Pol.* 1282B14–1283A23), Isocrates (*Areopag.* 14.), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 4.19.3) and Cicero (*Rep.* 1.34.51–52; 1.43.49).[50] This concept is also linked with the idea of monarchical power in the works of Xenophon (*Cyr.* 1.2.13–15; 2.2.21) and especially those of Isocrates.[51] The latter (*Nic.* 15) thought that only monarchies

> πλεῖστον μὲν νέμουσι τῷ βελτίστῳ, δεύτερον δὲ τῷ μετ' ἐκεῖνον, τρίτον δὲ καὶ τέταρτον τοῖς ἄλλοις κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον. καὶ ταῦτ' εἰ μὴ πανταχοῦ καθέστηκεν, ἀλλὰ τό γε βούλημα τῆς πολιτείας τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν.
>
> make the highest award to the best man, the next highest to the next best and in the same proportion to the third and the fourth and so on. Even if this practice does not obtain everywhere, such at least is the intention of the polity.[52]

The ruler should bridle the excesses of the crowd and ensure the best people are surrounded with respect, while the others should not be offended in any way (*Nic.* 15–17). The usage of the term ὁ βελτίστος, employed by Isocrates to denote

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49 Molin 2016, 469–470; Bono 2020, 44. Alternatively, Lindholmer 2020, 70 suggests that Maecenas in this passage (52.14.3) refers to a group of selected advisors, not a political class.

50 Kudryavtsev 1991, 65–73; For more examples of the application of this concept, as well as the Roman "optimate" tradition of regarding the political participation of different social groups as being commensurate with their status, see Arena 2013, 103–111.

51 Frolov 1969, 3–20.

52 Transl. by Norlin.

aristocrats, is characteristic of Dio, too: He contrasts the true democracy with a democracy that depends on the public mood. Similar criticism of the "impertinence of the crowd," which one can find in the speech of Maecenas, is also uttered by one of the characters of Herodotus' *Histories*. This is Megabyzus, an advocate of oligarchy,[53] who says that it is unacceptable while trying to save oneself from a tyrant's arrogance to fall under the power of the unbridled mob (3.82). Thus, Maecenas' ideas of "true democracy", "freedom which does not fail" and "equality by merits", being in line with the reflections of Xenophon, Isocrates, and Herodotus' Megabyzus, have an apparent aristocratic tone.

The aristocratic nature of Maecenas' ideas is most clearly seen at 52.15.1–3:

> μὴ γάρ τοι οἰηθῇς ὅτι τυραννῆσαί σοι, τόν τε δῆμον καὶ τὴν βουλὴν δουλωσαμένῳ, παραινῶ. τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ οὔτ᾽ ἂν ἐγώ ποτε εἰπεῖν οὔτ᾽ ἂν σὺ πρᾶξαι το λμήσειας: ἐκεῖναδὲ δὴ καὶ καλὰ καὶ χρήσιμα καὶ σοὶ καὶ τῇ πόλει γένοιτο ἄν, τό τε πάντα ἀ προσήκοντα αὐτόν σε **μετὰ τῶν ἀρίστων ἀνδρῶν** νομοθετεῖν, μηδενὸς τῶν πολλῶν μήτ᾽ ἀντιλέγοντος αὐτοῖς μήτ᾽ ἐναντιουμένου, καὶ τὸ τοὺς πολέμους **πρὸς τὰ ὑμέτερα βουλήματα** διοικεῖσθαι, πάντων αὐτίκα τῶν ἄλλων τὸ κελευόμενον ποιούντων, τό τε τὰς τῶν ἀρχόντων αἱρέσεις **ἐφ᾽ ὑμῖν** εἶναι, καὶ τὸ τὰς τιμὰς τάς τε τιμωρίας **ὑμᾶς** ὁρίζειν, ἵνα καὶ νόμος εὐθὺς ᾖ πᾶν ὅ τι ἂν βουλευσαμένῳ σοι **μετὰ τῶν ὁμοτίμων** ἀρέσῃ, καὶ οἱ πολέμιοι κρύφα καὶ κατὰ καιρὸν πολεμῶνται, οἵ τε τι ἐγχειριζόμενοι ἀπ᾽ ἀρετῆς ἀλλὰ μὴ κλήρῳ καὶ σπουδαρχίᾳ ἀποδεικνύωνται, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀγαθοὶ ἄνευ φθόνου τιμῶνται, οἱ δὲ κακοὶ ἄνευ συστάσεως κολάζωνται.
>
> For I would not have you think that I am advising you to enslave the people and the senate and then set up a tyranny. This is a thing I should never dare suggest to you nor would you bring yourself to do it. The other course, however, would be honourable and expedient both for you and for the city – that you should yourself, *in consultation with the best men*, enact all the appropriate laws, without the possibility of any opposition or remonstrance to these laws on the part of anyone from the masses; that you and your counsellors should conduct the wars *according to your own wishes*, all other citizens rendering instant obedience to your commands; that the choice of the officials should rest *with you and*

53 Megabyzus is depicted by Herodotus as one of the group of nobles who actively participated in "the Massacre of the Magi" (the latter had usurped power after the death of Cambyses) and held the constitutional debates on the sixth day after the revolt. For parallels and analogies between Herodotus and Dio's Agrippa-Maecenas discussion, see: Kuhlmann 2010, 110–120.

> *your advisers*; and that *you and they* should also determine the honours and the punishments. The advantage of all this would be that whatever pleased you in consultation *with your peers* would immediately become law; that our wars against our enemies would be waged with secrecy and at the opportune time; that those to whom any task was entrusted would be appointed because of their merit and not as the result of the lot or rivalry for office; that the good would be honoured without arousing jealousy and the bad punished without causing rebellion.

According to this project, a ruler is to make decisions on the key issues of foreign and domestic policy together with the "best men",[54] who may also be characterized as Octavian's "peers."[55] Such a view of the emperor's powers significantly differs from the image of a ruler that one can find in other works of the second and third centuries CE. Aelius Aristides calls the emperor "Olympian Zeus" whose "agents and envoys, much inferior to him … perform all commands quietly without noise and confusion" (*Or.* 26.89: οἱ δὲ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ διάκονοί τε καὶ πρέσβεις αὐτοῦ … πάντα δ᾽ ἄνευ θορύβου καὶ ταραχῆς σιωπῇ περαίνωσι; cf. 31–32). In the speech of Apollonius by Philostratus, Vespasian is represented as an "absolute ruler" (5.35: αὐτοκράτωρ) who relies upon his own children and friends. He himself leads the troops, renders judgments, and in terms of the state power is an autocrat (5.35–36). The comparison of Dio with the authors of the second and third centuries CE is telling. Dio Chrysostom,[56] in his treatise *On Kingship*, says that a ruler should be surrounded by true friends, and not by flatterers; these friends are to be regarded, however, not as equals by merit, but as the ruler's subjects, who are entrusted by their emperor with the most responsible tasks (*Or.* 3.87–88). Pliny the Younger, in his *Panegyricus*, notes the autonomy of the *princeps* in making decisions on a wide range of state-related issues. The emperor is the master on sea and land (4), he leads the troops and makes decisions on matters of war and peace on his own, he maintains discipline in his army (16–18), and he dominates his subjects based on his dignity

54 In this respect such a ruler resembles the Persian king depicted by Xenophon in *Cyropaedia* (1.4.6; 8.1.25–27).

55 This is most probably an indication of their senatorial origin. For the identification of these advisors as a small group of the emperor's confidants, see Lindholmer 2020, 71.

56 For a characterization of Dio Chrysostom's ideal king as taking more responsibilities upon himself, being more independent in decision-making and relying less on the political elite, see Madsen's article in this volume. He explains such a peculiarity of Dio Chrysostom by his non-senatorial origin and possible reflection of the Greek civic elite's vision of an ideal imperial rule which was based less on cooperation with the Senate than on providing more options for the admission of the Greek intellectuals into a narrow circle of the emperor's advisors and confidants.

and powers, which are higher than the powers of other people but still can be possessed by a human (24), while consensus between the *princeps* and the Senate is Caesar's grace (62–65). Against this background, Dio's "true democracy", where the ruler enacts laws, conducts wars, and chooses the officials jointly with counselors from among his "peers" and "the best men",[57] looks like a combination of monarchy and aristocracy.

It has been suggested by Hose that some of the phrasings in 52.15 characterize Dio as an advocate of strengthening autocracy.[58] Maecenas' idea that everything that the emperor discusses with his "equals by merit" becomes law "without the possibility of any opposition or remonstrance to these laws on the part of anyone from the masses"[59] (52.15.2) has been interpreted as a direct reference to the dependence of law on the ruler's will. Hose suggests that such a view resembles Polybius' (2.59.6) and Cicero's (*Rep.* 2.48) visions of lawlessness as inherent in a tyrant. It should, however, be noted in this regard that classical authors did not necessarily equate the dependence of law on the ruler's will with lawlessness. For instance, Dio Chrysostom, apparently taking into account the Roman realities of the second half of the first and early second centuries, refers to monarchy "as an irresponsible government where the king's will is law"[60] (*Or.* 3.43: βασιλεὺς δὲ καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ ὁ αὐτὸς ἀνυπεύθυνος ἄρχων ὁ δὲ νόμος βασιλέως δόγμα). This obviously means that the monarchical rule is "unrestricted" or "beyond anyone's control" (ἀνυπεύθυνος ἄρχων) but is not necessarily intended to negate the law. Pliny the Younger, a contemporary of Dio Chrysostom, also places the emperor above the law and praises Trajan for voluntarily submitting himself to the laws (*Pan.* 65: *ipse te legibus subiecisti: legibus, Caesar, quas nemo principi scripsit*). The perspective of these imperial era thinkers is quite understandable, given the way the issue is interpreted in Roman law. In Book 13 of his commentary on the *Lex Julia et Papia*, Julius Paulus says that the Princeps is exempt from compliance with the laws (*Dig*. 1.3.31: *legibus solutus est*). However, according to Ulpian, a contemporary of Cassius Dio, the emperor's decisions have the power of law since the people, via a *lex de imperio*, granted the *princeps* all their supreme power and authority (*Dig*. 1.4.1). We can see Dio reflecting legal and jurisprudential nuances like this and even quoting the official formulation: "they have been released from the laws, as the very words in Latin declare; that is, they are free from all compulsion of the

57 It should be noted that Dio's use of the second person plural (52.15.1–3: πρὸς τὰ ὑμέτερα βουλήματα ["according to your own wishes"], ἐφ᾽ ὑμῖν ["with you and your advisers"], ὑμᾶς ["you and they"]) emphasizes the collaboration between the emperor and his peers.

58 Hose 1994, 342. For a similar reading of this passage, see Madsen in this volume.

59 This may be an implicit reference to tribunes of the *plebs* (Markov 2004, 123).

60 Transl. by Cohoon.

laws and are bound by none of the written ordinances" (53.18.1: λέλυνται γὰρ δὴ τῶν νόμων, ὡς αὐτὰ τὰ Λατῖνα ῥήματα λέγει: τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν ἐλεύθεροι ἀπὸ πάσης ἀναγκαίας νομίσεώς εἰσι καὶ οὐδενὶ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐνέχονται). Consequently, the author might be taking into account the legal definition and justification of the emperor's legislative competence when making Maecenas suggest that the decisions taken by the *princeps* should have the power of law and should not be resisted or opposed (52.15.1). It might be suggested, then, that the comparison itself of the emperor's power with the "people's rule" as it is used in the works both by Dio Cassius and Flavius Philostratus is still Roman in origin and is closely linked to the idea of delegation by the people of the supreme power to the *princeps*. Dio's idea of "true democracy" has clear nuances, while 52.14–15 forms a kind of conceptual core of the whole speech.[61] They reveal the essence of the ideal state that Maecenas labels as "true democracy".

Having recognized the specifics of this conception, let us shine a spotlight on the issue of the general interpretation of the speech of Maecenas, which has been a matter of debate for over a century. Several basic approaches can be distinguished. According to Hammond, Maecenas' speech summarizes characteristics of the principate from the perspective of a historian of the beginning of the third century CE.[62] Some scholars try to employ Book 52 as a basis for the reconstruction of the political views of the historical Agrippa and Maecenas.[63] Moreover, Burden-Strevens has recently attempted to reintegrate Book 52 debates into their historical and narrative context, focusing primarily on the literary functions of both orations.[64] However, many regard the speech of Maecenas as a political program of Dio himself[65] and point to the

61 Markov 2008a, 152.

62 Hammond 1932, 88–101.

63 Avallone 1962, 18; Andre 1967, 78–82, France 2016, 773–86. For the correlation between some characteristics of historical Agrippa and Maecenas and Dio's choice of *dramatis personae*, see Cresci Marrone 2016, 61.

64 Burden-Strevens 2020, 46–53.

65 Among Maecenas' proposals there are none that relate exclusively to Augustus' principate, but there are some that relate only to the second century CE or the era of the Severans: for example, the extension of citizenship rights to all the free population of the Empire (52.19.6), which was actually carried out by Caracalla in 212. A number of Maecenas' "futuristic" proposals anticipate the time of Diocletian. These include lowering the status of Italy to the level of an ordinary province, the establishment of salaries for all civil officers from a soldier to a governor of the province, the division of civil and military administration (22.1–6), elimination of local coinage (30.9), concentration of finances exclusively in the Imperial Treasury (25.1–5) (Espinosa Ruiz 1982, 479). In addition, Maecenas proposes to divide the Empire into small provinces of equal size governed by the proconsul and his two assistants in the rank of ex-praetor (22.1–3). This proposal, as well as the introduction of a system of public education for senators and equestrians

anti-equestrian and pro-senatorial nature of the speech, even though there are different opinions on the essence of Dio-Maecenas' ideal state. According to one of the interpretations, Dio's main idea was to strengthen imperial power.[66] Currently, another view is more common: Dio's main objective was a return to political consensus and the principles of interaction of the emperor and the elite, characteristic of the "Golden Age" of the Antonines, which Dio traced back to Augustan times.[67] Some scholars even see in the speech of Maecenas a development of the above-mentioned idea about combining *principatus* and *libertas*.[68]

Against this background, Smyshlyaev tries to track what consequences the implementation of Maecenas' practical suggestions might have had in the Severan era and concludes that Cassius Dio's ideal monarchy is the same as "Augustus' principate in reverse." According to Smyshlyaev, refraining from advertising his sole rulership and preferring to be referred to as the First Senator, Augustus actually had the full power, while, according to Dio's proposal, on the contrary, the emperor officially becomes an absolute monarch, but in fact can exercise all his powers only through the Senate's administration, and thus state affairs turn out to be in the hands of the Senate's oligarchy. So, the emperor would no longer be able to find reliable support among municipal aristocrats and equestrians and, besides, the imperial cult and landholdings were important parts of how the principate actually functioned but are specifically rejected in Maecenas' speech. Dio deliberately created the rhetorical illusion that the objective of his program was to establish the absolute power of the emperor.[69] He probably expected to convince Severus Alexander to adopt the project,[70] though, in a later version of his article, Smyshlyaev labels Maecenas' proposal as "a senatorial utopia which was not fated to be realized."[71] However, such a characteristic, "utopia", is rather what a modern historian might think of

(26.1–8), was never implemented at all and only occurs in Cassius Dio (Reinhold 1988, 198).

66 Meyer 1891; Shtaerman 1957, 242; Crook 1955, 88; Bleicken 1962, 467; Millar 1964, 78, 111; Hose 1994, 392–393, 430–231; Lindholmer 2020, 70. For a similar vision, see Madsen in this volume.

67 Gabba 1955, 311–325; Letta 1979, 168–169; De Blois 1998–1999, 268–272, 278; De Blois 1994, 166–175; Kuhn-Chen 199–201, 243–247; Kemezis 2006, 126–127 and 2014, 132–133; Roberto 2010, 31.

68 Espinosa Ruiz 1982, 471–490; above, p. 110 n. 7.

69 In this respect, Smyshlyayev's reading of the speech is the reverse of Ando's view of Dio's Maecenas as advocating that the Senate should appear to have "mastery over all matters" in order to legitimize monarchy and ensure obedience of the subjects (Ando 2016, 570).

70 Smyshlyayev 1990, 54–66.

71 Publication of an English translation of this revised article is planned.

the speech of Maecenas, less likely a plan of Dio himself.[72] But one can agree with Smyshlyaev that implementation of Maecenas' suggestions would, in reality, have enabled senators to strengthen their influence in the provinces and acquire relative independence from the emperor's power, while the replenished and transformed Senate would have gained an importance it had never had either during the reign of the Severans, or that of the Antonines. Indeed, Maecenas' project contains a number of institutional innovations increasing the Senate's political power at the expense of the emperor.[73] Madsen rightly argues in this volume that Maecenas does not allow the Senate to have any legislative powers. However, the ideal emperor is supposed to share his executive and legislative responsibilities with the senators and, given the institutional innovations proposed by Maecenas, he would hardly have been able to make or, more importantly, implement any decision that ran contrary to the senatorial political agenda.

The reading of the speech as a political program appears to be quite convincing, especially if we pay attention to the level of detail itself and the nature of the proposals. Numerous concrete suggestions on institutional changes for constructing a political system that never existed in Rome preclude chapters 19–40 from sounding like just an observation of basic principles of the early principate. In addition, a general overview of the fundamentals of the social and political order described in 52.14–15, as we have seen, emphasizes the aristocratic nature of Maecenas' ideal form of ruling, especially if we consider the program in the context of the political thought of the second and third centuries. Having stated that, it does not follow that Dio advocated the restoration of the republican liberties. As a committed monarchist, he considered the establishment of the monarchy to be essential for saving Rome from the civil strife and extreme violence of the late republican period (44.1.1–2.3). Therefore, his ideal constitution could be basically nothing else but the principate, or a modified version of it, all the more so given that Augustus, according to Dio, did implement some of Maecenas' suggestions (52.41.2). Of course, Augustus' rule, especially his mode of "combining monarchy with democracy"

72 For a rejection of the possibility of Dio inventing a utopia, see Millar 1964, 107.

73 The Senate holds monopoly on the most important state posts (52.22), development of new laws, appointments to the highest public offices and distribution of honors and punishments are discussed by the emperor with a senatorial *consilium* (52.15.1–3); decisions on the most important issues are approved by the Senate (31 and 32); the lifetime position of a "subcensor" elected from among senators is introduced (52.21.3–7); judicial powers are exercised together with advisors from among the worthiest senators and equestrians (52.33.5); provincial requests to the emperor should be transmitted not directly, i.e., by sending embassies, but through a local governor (52.30.9–10).

(56.43.4), was a paradigm for Dio. But still, the principate turned out to be susceptible to deterioration under so-called "bad" emperors, and even the efforts of Marcus Aurelius, however dignified his rule might have been (72[71].34.2), proved to be not enough to prevent Rome from entering "the kingdom of iron and rust" (72[71].36.4) under his successors. The state system established by Augustus was no guarantee against a renewal of violence and wars of successions, as in 69 or 193–197 CE. Therefore, Dio goes further than just expressing his commitment to the principles of the Augustan rule and supplements his project of constitutional reforms with some novelties, so the security and stability of the state and, primarily, the wellbeing of *ordo senatorius*, might be achieved and ensured via the institutional arrangements thereby becoming less dependent on the monarchs' virtues.[74] Basically, Dio-Maecenas advocates for the principate as a mixed constitution,[75] placing the main emphasis on the combination of monarchical and aristocratic elements in the state structure as providing the social order.

The issue of Dio-Maecenas veiling the political meaning of his suggestions deserves special consideration. Whatever it might be, whether a utopia or an actual political program addressed to an emperor, most likely to Severus Alexander,[76] the radicalism of his project would hardly have remained unnoticed. This probably explains the apparent ambiguity of Maecenas' proposal. It can be assumed that Dio, while paying tribute to literary canons, made Maecenas' suggestions sound less radical and thus compatible with literary standards of decency, just as Aristides had turned to a well-known (and, maybe, a popular) practice of veiled narration. On the one hand, Dio uses a number of well-known clichés to justify the emperor's power – for instance, picturing the ruler as a helmsman saving his ship in a storm,[77] contrasting an ideal ruler with a tyrant, and raising the ruler above the law. Along with that, Maecenas' reasoning on "freedom", "democracy" and "equality", as we have seen, has particular meanings, which are clearly visible against the background of interpretation of this topic by authors of the second and third centuries.

In this regard, special mention can be made of the contrast between the views of Cassius Dio and Aelius Aristides. According to Aelius Aristides, the

74 According to Millar (1964, 118), "Dio, alone of imperial writers, expressed this aspiration, not in pious exhortations to benevolence and restraint, but in a coherent plan by which relations between the emperor and the ruling class could be put on a secure and satisfactory footing".

75 For a mixed constitution as Dio's political ideal, see Carsana 1990, 59–60; Carsana 2016, 557–558.

76 Markov 2009, 251.

77 Cf. Aristid. *Or*. 9.14 (Keil).

grounds for comparing or identifying the empire with the "universal democracy" (no matter how ironic such a comparison may be) are compliance with the interests of the provincial population, while Dio's "true democracy" is based upon the supremacy of some "best men", i.e., the Roman senators. With regard to the provinces, Dio makes Maecenas suggest being strict with them. Towns are prohibited from holding popular assemblies, spending money on public construction, organizing festivals or spectacles, ensuring lifetime support for the winners of competitions (except for winners of the Olympic and Pythian Games, as well as games held in Rome), or having their own mint or system of weights and measures (52.30.2–9). All pleas to the emperor should be submitted not directly, i.e., by sending ambassadors, but via a governor, who would decide himself which pleas should be approved and which should be rejected (52.30.9–10). Similar ideas can be found in the *Letters* of Pliny the Younger, who argues for the limitation of expenditures on the construction of public facilities and the staging of the games (*Ep*. 10.39–40, 112–113). He also sent a request to the emperor about the claims of athletes, unreasonably in his view, demanding benefits for winning a competition (*Ep*. 10.118–119), while the emperor replied that it was necessary to reduce such payments.[78] Therefore, it can be concluded that Maecenas' program, at least in part, reflects the senatorial political agenda of the Antonine period and, probably, that of the Severans era as well.

To sum up, the identification of the emperor's power with democracy, which can be found in the works of Greek authors of the second and third centuries, is based on the same *topos* employed to justify the advantages of the emperor's power. The cliché appears to be a result of the application of the Greek conceptual framework to the realities of imperial Rome. Moreover, the idea of representing Roman autocracy as rule by the people echoes the provision of Roman law by which the people delegate supreme power to the *princeps*. Along with that, due to its polysemy, the notion of δημοκρατία turns out to be a very convenient means of achieving the veiled narration used in political speeches in the times of the Second Sophistic.

In this regard, the contrast of Aelius Aristides' and Cassius Dio's views is especially illustrative. In their discourses about the Empire providing "democracy", "freedom" and "equality", one can find different and partly contradictory views of the emperor's power, which are primarily conditioned by the authors' social statuses. The interpretation of this topic by Aelius Aristides, a representative of the Greek provincial (municipal) elite, is probably a bit ironic: The empire is something more than the "the old Free Republic" since the lawlessness of the

78 For this, see Reinhold 1988, 202.

Roman authorities can be reined in by higher Roman authorities; the empire means equality since everyone, in the same way, stands in awe of the ruler, and, lastly, the empire is a "universal democracy", since the worthiest representatives of various peoples, who have received Roman citizenship, can call themselves Romans, while the previous division into Hellenes and barbarians is now of little importance. Along with that, Aristides' reflections on the "universal democracy" focus on such important institutions as Roman citizenship and the right to appeal (including to decisions made by governors). Dio's interpretation of this topic is quite different, which is probably due to the fact that he belonged to the Senatorial elite in the Severan period. In his opinion, autocracy as the "true democracy" implies significant restriction of the emperor's power and establishment, in fact, of an oligarchic regime. Along with that, Dio advocates for the strengthening of the central power and limitations on the rights and privileges of provincial towns. Such a difference in the authors' views, which lurks behind the seemingly similar rhetorical clichés, evidences the close link of their ideas with the political realities of their time.

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CHAPTER 5

Antoninum habemus, omnia habemus: The *nomen Antoninorum* Issue between the *Historia Augusta* and Cassius Dio

Antonio Pistellato

1 Introduction

This article starts from the account in the late *Historia Augusta* (henceforth *HA*) of various Roman emperors' use of the name "Antoninus" as a quasi-title between the late 2nd and the early 3rd century CE.[1] Specifically, the narrative material in the Severan portions of the *HA* pivots on a key element, namely the legitimizing force of the name "Antoninus" from the self-adoption of Septimius Severus into the house of the Antonines (summer 195 CE)[2] up to the fall of Severus Alexander and its aftermath (235–238 CE). Against this backdrop, "Antoninus" often seems not different in value from the title of "Augustus" customarily attributed to all Roman emperors by the Senate. Overall, the *HA* suggests that "Antoninus" was by far, and almost obsessively, the main dynastic and political issue of the Severan period.

It is no accident that the Latin title chosen for this article comes from the *HA* itself, specifically from the *Vita* of Diadumenianus, the son of Macrinus who briefly reigned as Augustus after the death of Caracalla. It incisively represents the core of the *HA's* focus on the subject: "An Antoninus we have, and in him we have all things" (*HA Diad.* 1.8: *Antoninum habemus, omnia habemus*).[3]

The *HA* is the only source handed down to us that elaborates on the use of the name Antoninus, and it does so on such a spectacular scale as to generate the question, based on the overall poor reputation of the *HA's* reliability:

1 Given the uncertainties concerning the dating of the *HA*'s final composition, the definition as "late", instead of a more customary "late-fourth-century", is deliberately cautious. As known, the text's explicit claims that it dates to the Tetrarchy have long been set aside. Nonetheless, the currently accepted dating to the end of the fourth century seems to be questionable. See, e.g., Mastandrea 2011, 2012 & 2014, who assumes that the redactor of the *HA* was Symmachus the Younger (d. 525 CE).

2 Kienast, Eck & Heil 2017, 149.

3 All Latin quotes of the *HA* are drawn from Hohl's Teubner edition (1965), and all translations come from Magie's Loeb edition (1921–1924), with modifications where needed.

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Does the *HA* narrate anything real? The suspicions of scholars have produced abundant academic literature, and the issue, commonly known as the *nomen Antoninorum* problem (variously declined in the *HA*), has been largely dismissed as a literary theme for a long time now, and with strong arguments.[4] The characterization of the *nomen Antoninorum* as a literary invention has never been really disputed. Hartke assumed as much in the early 1950s, and was later followed by Syme, Scholtemeijer and den Hengst between the 1970s and 1990s; more recently, the same idea was reiterated by Burgersdijk.[5]

To some extent, such a view is still valid, but I shall argue that the *HA* is making a literary game out of a genuine discussion which took place in the time of the Severans, that was much more significant than scholars give credit for, since it addressed a political and juridical problem in the transition from the Antonines to the Severans, and throughout the Severan period – political, as it concerned imperial power; juridical, as it affected imperial titulature. Indeed, if we more extensively consider the hundred years from the accession of Antoninus Pius (138 CE) to the crisis following the death of Severus Alexander (235–238 CE) with the problem of the *nomen Antoninorum* in mind, we see a possible – if only tentative – juridical evolution concerning the name "Antoninus". "Antoninus" became an inescapable element legitimizing the position of the Roman emperor – almost equal to the legitimizing force of the name "Augustus" in imperial titulature. The ideological impact of Antoninus Pius' and especially of Marcus Aurelius' principates was so strong, even after Commodus' disastrous principate, that Septimius Severus used the name "Antoninus" in order to establish his own legitimacy. Although he started a practice which his successors would emulate, I will argue that the attempt was ultimately a failure. Nonetheless, the effect of Severus' initiative is patently recognizable even beyond the Severan period.

The picture that I propose demands a reassessment of the whole *nomen Antoninorum* issue from a comparative perspective. In particular, I intend to compare the information we have from the *HA* to the information – which is both positive and negative, as we shall see – that we can draw from Cassius Dio's *Roman History*. The outcome should be twofold. On the one hand, it will provide new evidence for – at least – a better appreciation of the usefulness of

4 On the variations of the name "Antoninus" (*nomen Antoninorum*, *Antonini*, *Antoninum*, or even *Antonii*), with consequent artificial debates about "Antoninus" vs. "Antonius", see at length Hartke 1951, 123–153.

5 Hartke 1951, 127–142; Syme 1971, 78–88; Scholtemeijer 1976 & 1980; den Hengst 1981, 28–35; Scholtemeijer 1993; Burgersdijk 2010.

the *HA* narrative on the subject.[6] In this respect, I will argue that the redactor of the *HA*, though he follows his own literary agenda, is relying upon good source material from the early 3rd century.[7] The nature of his source material will be analyzed, and aspects of his literary treatment will be discussed as accurately as possible. At the same time, this article will contribute to a fuller understanding of Dio's efforts and challenges in dealing with contemporary history and the nature of the genre at the end of the "long second century" investigated in this collection. Dio was, in fact, contemporary to the Antonine-Severan timeframe narrated in the *HA*, and his work, though mainly epitomized for the period – with notable exceptions – offers us key elements as regards imperial legitimacy under the Severans. We shall see, in a sense, that as much the name "Antoninus" was a cold – but attractive – case for the redactor of the *HA*, it was just as much a hot case for Dio, whose reticence on it will, in particular, prove to be a significant response to a *longue-durée* political process, as opposed to the allegedly coeval but utterly antipodal response of the source used by the *HA*. It is very likely that behind this lies a question of genre, which must be duly addressed.

To summarize, a reassessment of the whole matter seems worth undertaking for five reasons:

– First, because it has never been analyzed from such a comparative perspective;
– Second, because it may have reflected a need to re-formalize the imperial titulature system, largely discredited under Commodus;
– Third, because our main source about it is the *HA*, which is usually underrated as a source of no historical value;

6 Two intertwined aspects should be pointed out here. The alleged unreliability of the *HA* tends to decrease with the *Vitae* taken into account here (see n. 8), due to their dependence on good source material. See at length Callu 1992, xiv–xlvi; *contra* Paschoud 1996, xxi–xxxvii. In addition, the credibility of particular items of information provided by the *HA* such as the catalogue of Cicero's five poems (*HA Gord.* 3.1) has never been called into question. Cf. Soubiran 1972, 4–69; Chastagnol 1994, 706 n1. Three poems (*Alcyones*, *Aratea*, *Marius*) are well known either directly or through parallel sources. If we assumed this is a forged (or even partially forged) catalogue, we would be unable to understand why it was created. In his commentary on the *Vitae* of the Gordians, Paschoud 2018, ad loc., does not deal with the issue.

7 I prefer to use the word "redactor" of the *HA* instead of "author" in line with the widespread belief that the *HA* in its present state (a collection of thirty lives) is the last edited version of a historiographically stratified work, due to the effort of a single redactor who inserted segments and completed the collection. This was Dessau's seminal idea, which was thereafter followed by many others. See Dessau 1889 and, e.g., Chastagnol 1994, xiii–xxxiv for a general overview until 1994, and Paschoud 1996, xviii–xix.

– Fourth, because the approach of Cassius Dio to the Severan period may add something to our understanding of the whole matter;
– Fifth, because it shows the involvement of contemporary authors like Cassius Dio and the *HA's* source for the Severan period in the political and juridical concerns of the Severan court.

2 The *nomen Antoninorum* Theme as Known from the *Historia Augusta*

Since the name "Antoninus" occurs in the *HA* to such a remarkable extent, let us provide some figures. The name appears in significant instances in 65 chapters distributed across 9 *Vitae* (either major or minor) from Septimius Severus to the Gordians:[8]

– *Severus* 10, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24;
– *Pescennius Niger* 8, 12;
– *Caracalla* 1, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11;
– *Geta* 1, 2, 3, 5;
– *Macrinus* 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14;
– *Diadumenus* 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9;
– *Heliogabalus* 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 33, 34;
– *Severus Alexander* 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12;
– *Gordiani tres* 3, 4, 5, 9, 17.

Imperial legitimacy is indeed the core of the whole "theme".[9] Scholtemeijer assumed that the author of the *HA* ostensibly designed the Severan narrative as a literary doublet of the Antonine dynasty.[10] In this scheme, Severus was

8 By "significant" I mean occurrences that provide information generally ascribable to what Callu 1992, viii, defines as "la séquence des événements vécus", as opposed to "l'image décalée qu'on pretend lui imposer" and to "les indices du temps réel de la redaction". Burgersdijk 2010, 118–210 extensively treats the *nomen Antoninorum* theme in the *HA* through 19 *Vitae* out of the 30 constituting the whole narrative. As for the distinction between major and minor *Vitae*, I intend those traditionally held as such by *HA* scholars. Major *Vitae* (here *Severus* and *Caracalla*) depend on a reliable (though unknown) principal source. Minor *Vitae* can be divided in two: secondary (here *Pescennius Niger* and *Geta*), depending on the principal source to a minor extent, and intermediate (here *Macrinus*, *Diadumenus*, *Heliogabalus*, *Severus Alexander* and *Gordiani tres*), depending on other sources (including Herodian and Cassius Dio); both add fictional information to the narrative body to complement the sources they rely upon. See further, e.g., Syme 1971, 54–77; Chastagnol 1994, xxxvi–xlii.

9 On imperial legitimacy under the Antonines and the Severans, see Ando 2016.

10 Scholtemeijer 1993; see also Hartke 1951, 123–153.

a new Antoninus Pius, and his sons Caracalla and Geta were supposed to be duplicates of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. Furthermore, Scholtemeijer recognized an additional narrative structure. The *Vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenianus played a pivotal role, around which the *Vitae* from Septimius Severus to Severus Alexander formed parallel pairs. The consequence is that the *Vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenianus – together with the *Vita* of Alexander Severus – overall feature the highest frequency of the name "Antoninus" in the *HA*, but not the highest number of significant occurrences as listed above.[11] These figures may be inversely proportional to the alleged need for self-legitimacy of the emperors as presented by the *HA*. This may imply a different narrative level, concerning Callu's "image décalée qu'on pretend lui imposer" (1992, viii) – specifically depending on the redactor's narrative plan.

All in all, according to the *HA*:

- Septimius Severus was not an Antonine but was the first emperor to use the name Antoninus as a political instrument.
- Caracalla and Geta were the first "Antonini" of the pseudo-Antonine dynasty, but both were bad emperors.
- The *Vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenianus synthesize the whole *nomen Antoninorum* theme.
- Elagabalus was the last member of the pseudo-dynasty who held the name "Antoninus". He, too, was a bad emperor, and indeed the worst of the series.
- Severus Alexander, though offered the name "Antoninus" by the Senate, refused to accept it, given the degeneration of the pseudo-dynasty under Elagabalus.[12]

In spite of one flagrant historical error (Geta was never called "Antoninus"),[13] this structure implies the development of a narrative device capable of shaping the redactor's ideas and captivating the readers of the *HA*. The error that makes Geta an Antoninus may or may not be incidental. In the latter case, it may depend on the need to have a pair of Antonini replicating the original Antonini, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. The desire to captivate the reader evidently implies that when the *HA* was finished, the theme was expected to be a hit – thus appealing to its audience for specific reasons. This might be due to a general interest in publicly known facts that were close to the time of the *HA*'s composition. We shall see, in particular, that usurpers and their need to

11 Figures are as follows (source: LLT-A ©Brepolis): *Severus* 16 occurrences; *Pescennius Niger* 2; *Caracalla* 12; *Geta* 17; *Macrinus* 42; *Didadumenus* 42; *Heliogabalus* 25; *Alexander Severus* 40; *Gordiani tres* 12.

12 Scholtemeijer 1994, 107.

13 Kienast, Eck & Heil 2017, 160.

assert legitimacy, as well as specific changes of fashion in nomenclature, might have played a role in this game. Of course, this is a crucial aspect of the alleged literary nature of the *nomen Antoninorum* theme in the *HA*.

A few passages from the *HA* allow the reader to grasp the basics of the *nomen Antoninorum* theme. Septimius Severus asked to be laid in the tomb of Marcus Aurelius after his death.[14] According to the *HA*, he maintained that "all emperors should thenceforth assume the name of Antoninus as they did that of Augustus" (*Sev*. 19.3: *Antonini nomen omnibus deinceps quasi Augusti adscribendum*). The equivalence between the names "Augustus" and "Antoninus" is neatly rendered by the Latin *quasi*.[15] Such an explicit equivalence is not isolated:

> *Ita enim nomen Antoninorum inoleuerat, ut uelli ex animis hominum non posset, quod omnium pectora uelut Aug*(*usti*) *nomen obsederat.*
>
> Such a hold had the name of the Antonines that it could not be removed from the thoughts of the people, because it had taken root in the hearts of all, even as had the name of Augustus.[16]
>
> *In animo habuit Seuerus, ut omnes deinceps principes quemadmodum Augusti, ita etiam Antonini dicerentur, idque amore Marci.*
>
> Severus purposed that every emperor from that time onward should be called Antoninus, just as they were called Augustus. This he did out of love for Marcus.[17]
>
> *Et cum diceret, adclamatum est: "quomodo Augustus, sic et Antoninus." et imp*(*erator*)*: "uideo, patres conscripti, quid uos* ⟨*moueat*⟩ *ad hoc nobis nomen addendum. Augustus primus primus est huius auctor imperii, et in eius* {*nomen*} *omnes uelut quadam adoptione aut iure hereditario succedimus; Antonini ipsi Augusti sunt dicti. sic Antoninus id e*[*m*]*st Pius Marcum et item Verum iure adoptionis uocauit, Commodo autem hereditarium fuit, susceptum Diadumeno, adfectatum in Bassiano, ridiculum in Var*[*el*]*io.*

14 The Antonines were laid in the tomb of Hadrian. See Hdn. 4.1.4.

15 See OLD, *s.v.*, *quasi* § 4. Cf. Suet. *Tib*. 50.2 for the use of *quasi* with *Augusti*.

16 *HA Carac*. 9.2.

17 *HA Geta* 2.2.

> And when he [i.e., Severus Alexander] had spoken, there were acclamations [by the senators]: "As you are now Augustus, so also be Antoninus." Again, the Emperor: "I see, O Conscript Fathers, what impels you to bestow upon us this name also. The first Augustus was the first founder of this Empire, and to his name, we all succeed, either by some form of adoption or by hereditary claim. Even the Antonines themselves bore the name of Augustus. Likewise, the first Antoninus gave his name to Marcus and also to Verus by a process of adoption, while in the case of Commodus it was inherited, in Diadumenianus' assumed, in Bassianus' [i.e., Caracalla] simulated, but in Varius' [i.e., Elagabalus] it would be a mockery."[18]

The acclamation, "As you are now Augustus, so also be Antoninus", is most patently and lucidly oriented to creating formal parallelism between the title "Augustus" and the name "Antoninus". Even when not explicitly stated, however, the equivalence is alluded to.[19] The *HA* suggests, as a logical consequence, that bearing the name "Antoninus" means having the right to hold absolute power.[20]

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18 *HA Alex. Sev.* 10.3–5. *Varelio* Σ (*Vario* conject. Hirschfeld), *Aurelio* P. Magie's translation has "Aurelius", which makes no sense.

19 *HA Heliogab*. 3.1: "But let us return to Varius Antoninus. After obtaining the imperial power he dispatched couriers to Rome, and there all classes were filled with enthusiasm, and a great desire for him was aroused in the whole people merely at the mention of the name Antoninus, now restored, as it seemed, not in an empty title (as it had been in the case of Diadumenianus), but actually in one of the blood for he had signed himself son of Antoninus Bassianus" (*sed ut ad Antoninum Varium reuertamur, nanctus imperium Romam nuntios misit; excitatisque omnibus ordinibus, omni etiam populo ad nomen Antoninum, quod non solum titulo, ut in Diadumeno fuerat, sed etiam in sanguine redditum uidebatur, cum se Antonini Bassiani filium scripsisset, ingens eius desiderium factum est*).

20 *HA Macrin*. 3.9: "Others, again, declare that so great was the love for this name that the people and soldiers would not deem a man worthy of the imperial power did they not hear him called by the name Antoninus" (*alii uero tantum desiderium nominis huius fuisse dicunt, ut, nisi populus et milites Antonini nomen audirent, imperatorium non putarent*); 6.6: "Likewise, farther on: 'To my son Diadumenianus, who is known to you, the soldiers have given both the imperial power and the name for they have called him Antoninus that he might be honoured, first with this name, but also with the office of monarch'" (*item infra: 'Diadumenum filium meum uobis notum et imperio miles donauit et nomine, Antoninum uidelicet appellans, ut cohonestetur prius nomine, sic etiam regni honore'*); *Diad*. 2.2: "Thereupon the child himself, Diadumenianus Antoninus, the Emperor, spoke: 'I bring you thanks, Comrades, because you have bestowed upon me both imperial office and name'" (*post hoc ipse puerulus Diadumenus Antoninus imperator dixit: 'gratias uobis, commilitones, quod me et imperio donastis et nomine'*); *Alex. Sev*. 11.3: "And when they had cried this out many times, Alexander Augustus spoke: 'It would be easier, O Conscript

In addition, what looks very much like fake news may add something to our discussion. According to the *HA*, Gordian I composed an *Antoniniad* celebrating the lives of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius.[21] Such a piece of information may or may not be implausible. In spite of abundant fake literature mentioned throughout the *HA*, sometimes references are reliable and indeed can be confirmed by parallel sources.[22] Nevertheless, the notion of a hexametric poem, to be understood as the *Aeneid* of the Antonines, is quite impressive. Though unrealistic, it is a tangible testimony to the charm that the Antonines inspired in mid- and late-imperial Rome – which, unlike the *Antoniniad*, is unquestionable.[23] As Kemezis has remarked, nostalgia for Marcus Aurelius especially was a persistent feeling among the senatorial elite.[24] This is true far beyond the 3rd century CE.[25] The *HA* develops part of the *nomen Antoninorum* theme around such nostalgia, which does not involve Marcus Aurelius alone. Passages include the Antonines individually and globally.[26]

Nonetheless, as Scholtemeijer maintained, all this has nothing to do with factual history. For Scholtemeijer, it is rather "merely a means to a literary end."[27]

Fathers, to take the name of the Antonines, for in so doing I should make some concession either to kinship or to a joint possession in that imperial name'" (*et cum saepius diceret, Alexander Augustu⟨s⟩: 'facilius fuit, p(atres) c(onscripti), ut Antoninorum nomen acciperem, aliquid enim uel adfinitati deferrem uel consortioni nominis imperialis*').

21 *HA Gord.* 3.3: "Besides these, just as Vergil wrote an *Aeneid*, Statius an *Achilleid*, and many others *Alexandriads*, he [i.e. Gordian I] wrote an *Antoniniad*, the lives, that is, of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Antoninus, most learnedly versified in thirty books, wherein he recounted their wars and other doings both public and private" (*scripsit praeterea, quemadmodum Vergilius Aeneidos* [*libros*] *et Statius Achilleidos et multi alii ⟨Alexan⟩dridos, ita etiam ille Antoniniados, hoc est Antoninum Pium et Antoninum Marcum, uersibus disertissimis libris triginta uitam illorum et bella et publice priuatimque gesta perscribens*).

22 See famously Syme 1976 on bogus authors in the *HA*, but again cf. Soubiran 1972 (n. 6 above) on the credibility of Cicero's poems in the *HA*, which are mentioned immediately before the *Antoniniad* (*Gord.* 3.2). Palombi 2017, 65 n.3 still takes Gordian I's poem for granted, however. References in Paschoud 2018, 221.

23 Momigliano 1954, 123; Callu 1992, xliii defines the Antonines as a "*gens* providentielle" in the *HA*.

24 Kemezis 2012, 387–388. On Marcus Aurelius as an ideal model, see also Horst 2017, 206–210. Of course, in his turn Marcus followed the wise-man pattern of his predecessor Antoninus Pius: see, e.g., M. Aur. *Med.* 6.30; Julian. *Or.* 10.9; Haake 2017.

25 See Hartke 1951, 139–140.

26 *HA Diad.* 2.3–4: "I, moreover, will strive earnestly not to fail the name of the Antonines. For I know that it is the name of Pius and of Marcus and of Verus that I have taken, and to live according to the standard of these is difficult indeed" (*ego autem elaborabo, ne desim nomini Antoninorum. Scio enim me Pii, me Marci, me Veri suscepisse nomen, quibus satis facere perdifficile est*); and see *Alex. Sev.* 10.3–5 (above p. 143–144 and n. 18).

27 Scholtemeijer 1993, 109.

This is no different from the ideas of Syme.[28] The assumption is problematic, however. It is based only on internal analysis of the *HA*, with almost no reference to parallel sources. A thorough reading of Cassius Dio may lead to a somewhat different picture, namely that what we have in the *HA* provides evidence of a concrete political issue instead. The implication is that we cannot dismiss the information we get from the *HA* on the *nomen Antoninorum* as useless.

In this respect, we may refer to what Mommsen in the *Römisches Staatsrecht* argued about the historical reality of the name "Antoninus" as a title:

> Die zahlreichen übrigen Cognomina, sowohl die angestammten, unter denen *Antoninus* in dem Jahrhundert nach seines ersten Trägers Tode beinahe dieselbe Rolle spielt, wie sie das Cognomen *Caesar* dauernd gespielt hat, ferner die Ehrenbeinamen, wie *Germanicus* bei Vitellius und viele ähnliche Siegestitel, sodann *Optimus*, *Pius*, *Felix* u. dgl. M., sind durchgängig, auch wo sie sich wiederholen, persönlich und für die Auffassung der kaiserlichen Gewalt im Allgemeinen von keiner Bedeutung, so dass sie hier übergangen werden können.[29]

Mommsen's was undoubtedly a negative assessment. He only briefly noted that in the hundred years or so following the death of Antoninus Pius the name Antoninus played almost the same role that had been established for the name of Caesar and other honorary names. They were individually bestowed by the Senate but did not have the juridical significance of the *nomen Augustum*, which distinguished the persona of the emperor as transcendently above any other Roman citizen.[30] Although Mommsen knew that those names were often the objects of dynastic transmission, he generally believed that they were of no importance at all as regards imperial power itself. This is why he could firmly conclude "sie hier übergangen werden können." The subject was far beneath the interest and scope of his *Römisches Staatsrecht*.

So, inasmuch as the *cognomina* had no importance for concrete imperial power, Mommsen preferred to drop the problem of the name "Antoninus" in its entirety – which he was wrong to do. He was certainly right in implying the lack of any juridically founded relation between receiving honorary names and holding practical power.[31] However, the equivalence Mommsen

28 Syme 1971.

29 Mommsen 1887, 774.

30 Especially, the holder of the name of Augustus was *legibus solutus* (Ulp. 13 *ad l. Iul. et Pap.*, Dig. 1.3.31). See, e.g., Pistellato 2015, 394.

31 On the imperial women holding the title of Augusta from Livia through Crispina, see Pistellato 2015.

admitted between the name of Antoninus and that of Caesar was legally founded, as "Caesar" was officially part of the imperial titulature – just as "Augustus" was. So, what about "Antoninus"? Names and titles, especially those officially bestowed by the Senate, held legal value and consequently had political importance.[32] This fostered legitimacy, as was fairly clear to Cassius Dio – as we shall see.

3 The *nomen Antoninorum* Issue in the Light of Dio's *Roman History*

Dio adds significant clues to confirm that what we have in the *HA* entails a real political problem, which lies beneath the *HA's* redundant treatment. As a very distinguished member of the senatorial elite under the Antonines and the Severans, Dio was entirely familiar with contemporary political issues.[33] The political issues of the Severan period inspired Dio's historiographical project but also required, on occasion, particular circumspection on the historian's part. As Madsen maintains, for example, the Severan books of the *Roman History* display a remarkably prudent approach, which cannot but be the result of Dio's uneasiness with the subject matter he is treating.[34]

Throughout the *Roman History*, we find implicit evidence of this circumspection. In Books 52 and 53, Dio explores the origin of the title "Augustus" that had effectively legitimated the *statio principis* since the time of its first holder, in January 27 BCE. Dio's interest in the meaning of the name "Augustus" is unparalleled in historiography, as far as I know.[35] This is striking. In spite of being rather cursory, Dio's attention reveals a specific interest in the origins of imperial legitimacy in Rome, which deserves our own attention. The first passage is drawn from Maecenas' famous speech in the course of the narrative concerning 29 BCE (52.40.1–2):

> ταῦτά τε οὖν καὶ τἆλλα πάνθ' ὅσα εἴρηκα ἐννοήσας πείσθητί μοι, καὶ μὴ πρόῃ τὴν τύχην, ἥτις σε ἐκ πάντων ἐπελέξατο καὶ προεστήσατο. ὡς εἴ γε τὸ μὲν πρᾶγμα τὸ τῆς μοναρχίας αἱρῇ, τὸ δ' ὄνομα τὸ τῆς βασιλείας ὡς καὶ ἐπάρατον φοβῇ, τοῦτο μὲν μὴ προσλάβῃς, τῇ δὲ δὴ τοῦ Καίσαρος προσηγορίᾳ χρώμενος

32 As for the name of Caesar, see, e.g., how emphatically the *senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* puts the accent on the reverence due to the name on the critical occasion of the trial against Calpurnius Piso for the death of Germanicus (l. 165). See Eck, Caballos & Fernández 1996, 254.

33 See, e.g., Molin 2016a & 2016b; Madsen 2016 & 2018.

34 Madsen 2018, 298–302.

35 Pistellato 2015, 410. Cf. Ferrary 2001, 133.

> αὐτάρχει. εἰ δ' οὖν καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν ἐπικλήσεων προσδέῃ, δώσουσι μέν σοι τὴν τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος, ὥσπερ καὶ τῷ πατρί σου ἔδωκαν, σεβιοῦσι δέ σε καὶ ἑτέρᾳ τινὶ προσρήσει, ὥστε σε πᾶν τὸ τῆς βασιλείας ἔργον ἄνευ τοῦ τῆς ἐπωνυμίας αὐτῆς ἐπιφθόνου καρποῦσθαι.
>
> Think upon these things and upon all that I have told you, and be persuaded of me, and let not this fortune slip which has chosen you from all mankind and has set you up as their ruler. For, if you prefer the monarchy in fact but fear the title of "king" as being accursed, you have but to decline this title and still be sole ruler under the appellation of *Caesar*. And if you require still other epithets, your people will give you that of *imperator* as they gave it to your father; and they will pay reverence to your august position by still another term of address so that you will enjoy fully the reality of the kingship without the *odium* which attaches to the name of "king."[36]

These are the very last words that Maecenas addresses to Octavian. Of course, Dio makes Maecenas foresee the *nomen Augustum* as part of Octavian's official titulature from 27 BCE onwards. In order to define the name "Augustus", Dio uses the word πρόσρησις ("term of address", as Cary renders it; cf. LSJ[9], *s.v.*, πρόσρησις 1). As such, the name "Augustus" indicates the monarchical primacy of its bearer but prevents any accusation of *adfectatio regni*. In this respect, it is well known that in composing the speeches of Agrippa and Maecenas, Dio had in mind the political experience of his own time.[37]

Two other passages explore the meaning of "Augustus". Both are from Book 53, as Dio's account focuses on the honours that the Senate bestowed upon Octavian in January 27 BCE (respectively, 53.16.7–8 and 18.1–2):

> βουληθέντων γάρ σφων ἰδίως πως αὐτὸν προσειπεῖν, καὶ τῶν μὲν τὸ τῶν δὲ τὸ καὶ ἐσηγουμένων καὶ αἱρουμένων, ὁ Καῖσαρ ἐπεθύμει μὲν ἰσχυρῶς Ῥωμύλος ὀνομασθῆναι, αἰσθόμενος δὲ ὅτι ὑποπτεύεται ἐκ τούτου τῆς βασιλείας ἐπιθυμεῖν, οὐκέτ' αὐτοῦ ἀντεποιήσατο, ἀλλὰ Αὔγουστος ὡς καὶ πλεῖόν τι ἢ κατὰ

36 Translations are drawn from Cary's Loeb edition (1914–1927).

37 See, e.g., Millar 1964, 102–118; Horst 2010; Adler 2012; Cresci Marrone 2016; Burden-Strevens 2020, 40–53, 264–275; see also, in this volume, Madsen on Maecenas' speech and on the political elaboration between the 1st and early 2nd century CE, and Markov on Maecenas and the Second Sophistic intellectual scenario elaborating on the Principate as δημοκρατία between the 2nd and early 3rd century CE, a scenario which Dio seems to be in critical dialogue with.

ἀνθρώπους ὢν ἐπεκλήθη· πάντα γὰρ τὰ ἐντιμότατα καὶ τὰ ἱερώτατα αὔγουστα προσαγορεύεται. ἐξ οὗπερ καὶ σεβαστὸν αὐτὸν καὶ ἑλληνίζοντές πως, ὥσπερ τινὰ σεπτόν, ἀπὸ τοῦ σεβάζεσθαι, προσεῖπον.

For when they wished to call him by some distinctive title, and men were proposing one title and another and urging its selection, Caesar was exceedingly desirous of being called Romulus, but when he perceived that this caused him to be suspected of desiring the kingship, he desisted from his efforts to obtain it, and took the title of Augustus, signifying that he was more than human; for all the most precious and sacred objects are termed *augusta*. Therefore, they addressed him also in Greek as *Sebastos*, meaning an august personage, from the passive of the verb *sebazo*, "to revere."

λέλυνται γὰρ δὴ τῶν νόμων, ὡς αὐτὰ τὰ Λατῖνα ῥήματα λέγει· τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐλεύθεροι ἀπὸ πάσης ἀναγκαίας νομίσεώς εἰσι καὶ οὐδενὶ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐνέχονται. καὶ οὕτως ἐκ τούτων τῶν δημοκρατικῶν ὀνομάτων πᾶσαν τὴν τῆς πολιτείας ἰσχὺν περιβέβληνται ὥστε καὶ τὰ τῶν βασιλέων, πλὴν τοῦ φορτικοῦ τῆς προσηγορίας αὐτῶν, ἔχειν. ἡ γὰρ δὴ τοῦ Καίσαρος ἥ τε τοῦ Αὐγούστου πρόσρησις δύναμιν μὲν οὐδεμίαν αὐτοῖς οἰκείαν προστίθησι, δηλοῖ δ' ἄλλως τὸ μὲν τὴν τοῦ γένους σφῶν διαδοχήν, τὸ δὲ τὴν τοῦ ἀξιώματος λαμπρότητα.

For they [i.e., the emperors] have been released from the laws, as the very words in Latin declare; that is, they are free from all compulsion of the laws and are bound by none of the written ordinances. Thus, by virtue of these democratic names they have clothed themselves with all the powers of the government, to such an extent that they actually possess all the prerogatives of kings except their paltry title. For the appellation, Caesar or Augustus confers upon them no peculiar power but merely shows in the one case that they are heirs of the family to which they belong and in the other the splendour of their official position.

What we may infer from these passages is that "Augustus" is an essential legitimizing factor. It shapes the reality of monarchy, without conferring any discrete power – which is how imperial legitimacy is supposed to work.[38]

38 Cf. Augustus' *Res Gestae* 34, and see Scheid 2007, 88–91. See also Cresci Marrone 2016, 59–60; Bellissime & Hurlet 2018, 70–71, 74.

That being said, I suggest that Dio's particular interest mirrors, prospectively and theoretically, the political and intellectual climate of his time. Since the death of Commodus, the legitimizing force of the title "Augustus" was probably no longer the same. In this respect, various allusions to the *nomen Antoninorum* issue can be found in the Severan books of the *Roman History*. A closer look at the events, and at what Dio says and does not say, may prove useful. What Dio does not say – but alludes to – is especially significant, as it may shed light on the political and juridical reality of the Severan period. Against this backdrop, we must generally acknowledge that any statement about Dio's omissions in this portion of the *Roman History* cannot disregard the incomplete state of Dio's current text. Nevertheless, two aspects should be highlighted here. On the one hand, Berbessou-Broustet has convincingly shown that Xiphilinus – the primary epitomator of Dio's lost Books – was an overall trustworthy compiler of the *Roman History*. On the other hand, the segments of Dio's Book 79(78) that I shall discuss in the following pages are preserved completely – an especially interesting circumstance, which allows us to infer that if Dio had made comments elsewhere, we would expect to find something in Book 79(78) as well.[39]

Dio never calls openly into question that when Septimius Severus took power the title "Augustus" was adequate to legitimize the imperial position. It never appears that the title no longer had the same effect in the monarch's overall legitimation strategy. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the name "Antoninus" in the *HA* seems to call precisely that issue into question. A thorough reading of the *Roman History* leaves no doubt that Dio himself is aware of it, but he raises the topic only reluctantly – and he does so quite advisedly. The impression is that he does not feel at ease with an issue which had become awkward by the late Severan period. As a high-ranking senator who had witnessed the whole process since its very beginnings, Dio was – though indirectly – involved in it. Nonetheless, if we consider Dio's commitment as a historian, he would have been far more exposed – to criticism, perhaps even personal consequences – if he had explicitly addressed such a hot topic in the *Roman History* (for Dio's publication years, see below, n. 67).

Multiple factors made the transition from the Antonines to the Severans traumatic. The Antonine dynasty had collapsed. The Romans had fallen into

39 See Berbessou-Broustet 2016, who offers decisive parallels between Dio's preserved sections and Xiphilinus' epitome (*contra* Millar 1964, 2, 67, who had a poor opinion of Xiphilinus; cf. Mallan 2013, who maintains that Xiphilinus has his own programme of composition, and his work must be regarded as significantly distinct from Dio's). Xiphilinus' reliability is generally acknowledged also by Pelling 1997, 124.

a new civil war. At an institutional level, the shock was even more severe as Commodus had broken the relationship between the emperor and the Senate. Since the title "Augustus" served – *inter alia* – to confirm that relationship, Commodus' rupture with the Senate also called into question the power of that title. In addition, once appointed emperor by the Senate, Septimius Severus legitimized himself by using not only the title Augustus but also the name Pertinax (April 9, 193 CE).[40] Two years later, Severus self-adopted as the son of Marcus Aurelius – thus becoming the brother of Commodus – and took the name of Pius after the first of the Antonines (summer 195 CE).[41] The adoption obviously aimed at securing his position, in a process similar to what Vespasian had done after the death of Nero and the civil war of 68/69 CE. The big difference lies in Severus' self-adoption among the Antonines, though: Vespasian had never called himself the brother of Nero or the son of Claudius. Nonetheless, Vespasian strongly – and juridically, as Mantovani has demonstrated – linked himself to the good Julio-Claudian emperors (Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius), as is made clear by the *lex de imperio* (69/70 CE).[42] For Vespasian, the name "Augustus" was not just part of the customary imperial titulature. It not only asserted the stability of the relation between the emperor and the Senate but also ratified a glorious political lineage. In 195 CE, however, Severus did something more audacious. By adopting himself into the Antonines, he ostensibly included the good and the bad, the best (Marcus) and the worst (Commodus).[43] So potent was the name "Antoninus", well beyond that of any individual member of the dynasty.

On these grounds, is there any really valid reason to entirely dismiss as fiction the *nomen Antoninorum* theme just as it is narrated in the *HA*? If we combine the information we have from the *HA* with Dio's *Roman History*, the results suggest that we may usefully consider it as a political reality. Some recurrent elements characterize Dio's account, which for the present purpose we may arrange in three categories: the place of burial, physical appearance, and political outlook.

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40 Kienast, Eck & Heil 2017, 149.

41 Kienast, Eck & Heil 2017, 149. Coins featuring Severus as Antoninus circulated in the East. Nothing but "barbarous" imitations of official Roman coins (*aurei*), but significantly confusing proper (that is official) and improper elements; an (unpublished, as far as I know) example can be found at https://www.acsearch.info/search.html?id=1825538 (accessed 2021/06/14).

42 *CIL* 6.930 = *ILS* 244, *ll.* 1, 4, 13, 17, 20–22. See Brunt 1977, and especially Mantovani 2005 and 2009, 138–154.

43 The labels "best" and "worst" are to be intended from the point of view of posterity (including Dio, who wrote after Severus' death; see below, n. 67), and of course not from the contemporary one of Severus.

As for the first category, Dio tells us that the tomb of the Antonines was the family tomb chosen by Severus, Caracalla, and Julia Domna. That was supposed to be a material sign of their Antonine lineage.[44] This is something we learn from the *HA* as well, as already seen.

However, Dio adds more information that we may connect to the *nomen Antoninorum* issue, which we do not find in the *HA*. This concerns our second category, physical appearance. From Dio's account, we learn that Macrinus used to be bearded. He styled himself after the Antonine fashion. It was, especially, Marcus Aurelius' fashion – which, at the same time, meant a political identification mark. In what might be seen as a sign of moral betrayal of his model, Macrinus cut off his beard in order not to be recognized when trying to escape from being captured.[45] Dio's largely extant account does not say anything explicit about Macrinus' imitation of Marcus Aurelius, which may imply discredit for the equestrian emperor from the senator's point of view, as maintained by Zimmermann.[46] Here, a comparison with Herodian is quite telling, for Herodian is the only source that explicitly informs us that Macrinus strove

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44 Cass. Dio 77[76].15.4 = Xiph. 324.22–24: "Afterwards his [i.e., Severus'] bones were put in an urn of purple stone, carried to Rome, and deposited in the tomb of the Antonines" (καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο τὰ ὀστᾶ ἐς ὑδρίαν πορφυροῦ λίθου ἐμβληθέντα ἔς τε τὴν Ῥώμην ἐκομίσθη καὶ ἐς τὸ Ἀντωνινεῖον ἀπετέθη. Cf. Aur. Vict. 20.30); 79[78].9.1–3: "The body of Antoninus [i.e. Caracalla] was burned and his bones were deposited in the tomb of the Antonines, after being brought into Rome secretly at night.... But in general, much evil was continually spoken of him by everybody; in fact, people no longer called him Antoninus, but some called him Bassianus, his original name, others Caracallus, as I have stated, and yet others Tarautas, from the nickname of a gladiator who was most insignificant and ugly in appearance and most reckless and bloodthirsty in spirit" (τοῦ δ' οὖν Ἀντωνίνου τό τε σῶμα ἐκαύθη, καὶ τὰ ὀστᾶ ἐν τῷ Ἀντωνινείῳ, κρύφα νυκτὸς ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην κομισθέντα, ἐτέθη· [...] ἄλλως δὲ πολλὰ καὶ κακὰ ὑπὸ πάντων ἤκουεν ἀεί· οὐδὲ γὰρ Ἀντωνῖνον ἔτ' αὐτὸν ἐκάλουν, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν Βασσιανὸν τὸ ἀρχαῖον ὄνομα, οἱ δὲ Καράκαλλον, ὥσπερ εἶπον, οἱ δὲ καὶ Ταραύταν ἐκ μονομάχου τινὸς προσηγορίας τό τ' εἶδος καὶ σμικροτάτου καὶ κακοειδεστάτου καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ θρασυτάτου καὶ μιαιφονωτάτου. On this passage see Scott 2018, 45–46. Cf. also Hdn. 3.10.5; Aur. Vict. 21.6); 79[78].24.3: "This, then, was the fate of Julia (Domna). Her body was brought to Rome and placed in the tomb of Gaius and Lucius. Later, however, both her bones and those of Geta were transferred by her sister Maesa to the precinct of Antoninus" (καὶ τὰ μὲν τῆς Ἰουλίας οὕτως ἔσχε, τό τε σῶμα αὐτῆς ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην ἀναχθὲν ἐν τῷ τοῦ Γαΐου τοῦ τε Λουκίου μνήματι κατετέθη· ὕστερον μέντοι καὶ ἐκεῖνα, ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ τοῦ Γέτα ὀστᾶ, πρὸς τῆς Μαίσης τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτῆς ἐς τὸ τοῦ Ἀντωνίνου τεμένισμα μετεκομίσθη). See Scott 2018, 75.

45 Cass. Dio 79[78].39.2: "He [i.e. Macrinus] left by night on horseback, having first shaved his head and his whole chin, and wearing a dark garment over his purple robe, in order that he might, so far as possible, resemble an ordinary citizen" (ἀπέδρα καὶ ἐκεῖθεν νυκτὸς ἐπὶ ἵππων, τήν τε κεφαλὴν καὶ τὸ γένειον πᾶν ξυράμενος, καὶ ἐσθῆτα φαιὰν κατὰ τῆς ἁλουργοῦς, ἵν' ὅτι μάλιστα ἰδιώτῃ τινὶ ἐοίκῃ, λαβών). See Gleason 2011, 73–74; Scott 2018, 98.

46 Zimmermann 1999, 217.

to appear as a new Marcus Aurelius. His beard was part of what we may call a set of mannerisms aimed at connecting him with the best of the Antonines.[47] This consistently relates to Macrinus' strategy of calling Diadumenianus "Antoninus".

The third category, political outlook, offers good evidence that Dio is aware not only of the importance of the Antonine model throughout the Severan period but also of the strategic value of the name "Antoninus" between the principates of Macrinus and Elagabalus. All these passages establish a direct link to Marcus Aurelius as a paragon of good political demeanor. Dio underlines that Severus wished to avoid putting any senator to death. This perfectly fits the Stoic attitude of Marcus Aurelius – as well as of others before him, from Nerva to Hadrian, though Marcus is obviously Severus' model here.[48] As a senator, Dio could not miss the point. The same wish occurs with Macrinus as if it were – as it was indeed – a *Leitmotiv*. No doubt, it became popular as an exquisitely Antonine instance after Marcus Aurelius.[49]

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47 Herodian. 5.2.3–4; 5.4.7: "He [i.e. Macrinus] should not have wasted his time in Antioch cultivating his beard and walking about the place more than necessary at a slow pace and speaking to people at audiences very slowly and laboriously so that frequently he could not even be heard because of his low voice. These were supposedly imitations of Marcus' characteristics [...] towards evening he took off his cloak and the various imperial insignia he was wearing, shaved off his beard to avoid recognition and put on the clothes of an ordinary traveller, keeping his head covered all the time. With a few centurions who he believed were completely trustworthy he quietly ran away" (ἐν δὲ τῇ Ἀντιοχείᾳ διέτριβε γένειόν τε ἀσκῶν, βαδίζων τε πλέον τοῦ δέοντος ἠρεμαίως, βραδύτατά τε καὶ μόλις τοῖς προσιοῦσιν ἀποκρινόμενος ὡς μηδ' ἀκούεσθαι πολλάκις διὰ τὸ καθειμένον τῆς φωνῆς. ἐζήλου δὲ ταῦτα ὡς δὴ Μάρκου ἐπιτηδεύματα [...] ἑσπέρας ἤδη προσιούσης, ἀπορρίψας τὸ χλαμύδιον καὶ εἴ τι σχῆμα βασιλικὸν περιέκειτο, λαθὼν ἀποδιδράσκει σὺν ὀλίγοις ἑκατοντάρχαις, οὓς πιστοτάτους ᾤετο, τὸ γένειον ἀποκειράμενος, ὡς μὴ γνωρίζοιτο, ἐσθῆτά τε ὁδοιπορικὴν λαβὼν καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀεὶ σκέπων. Greek text and English translation from Whittaker's Loeb edition [1969]). Zimmermann 1999, 220–221, and Gleason 2011, 68 n. 172, rely on coinage to underline that Macrinus grew his beard to differentiate himself from his predecessor Caracalla, whose beard had been short instead. For Zimmermann (220), Herodian's interest in Macrinus' self-representation depends on his special need to evaluate Macrinus against the model of the ideal emperors Marcus Aurelius and Pertinax: "Dies war schon deshalb notwendig, um die zeitlose Gültigkeit der seiner Ansicht nach mit den gennanten Idealkaisern verbundenen Prinzipien zu erhalten".

48 Cass. Dio 75[74].2.1 = Xiph. 294.16–21: "He [i.e. Severus] made us some brave promises, such as the good emperors of old had given, to the effect that he would not put any senator to death" (ἐσελθὼν δὲ οὕτως ἐνεανιεύσατο μὲν οἷα καὶ οἱ πρῴην ἀγαθοὶ αὐτοκράτορες πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὡς οὐδένα τῶν βουλευτῶν ἀποκτενεῖ). On Marcus Aurelius' own view of how an emperor should conduct himself for the common good, see *Med.* 2.1; 3.5; 4.12; 4.31; 5.30; 5.35–36; 6.7; 6.30; 6.44; 7.5; 7.31; 7.54; 8.12; 10.6; 10.8; 11.4; 11.18; 12.20. Cf. Birley 1962, 197–198.

49 Cass. Dio 79[78].21.3: "The emperor [i.e. Macrinus] expressly forbade putting any of them to death, 'lest,' to quote his very words, 'we should be found doing ourselves the

Severus' self-adoption celebrated the continuity of lineage and annulled all memory sanctions against Commodus due to the crimes ascribed to him.[50] Thus it should not be striking that after the death of Caracalla (April 217 CE) – whom Severus had officially called Antoninus – the new emperor Macrinus wanted his son Diadumenianus to be officially named Antoninus as well (early May 217).[51] For Macrinus, this was a key element to legitimize and secure his own position, not so much because he was the first equestrian emperor – and, thus, in particular need of support within the Senate – as because he aimed to confirm the special support he already benefited from.[52] The troops he commanded assured him of military support. If we are to believe the *HA*, the soldiers enthusiastically hailed Diadumenianus as "Antoninus" (*Diad.* 1.8). Nonetheless, a passage from Dio's account is most interesting in this respect. It is about some rioting in Rome in 217 CE, on the occasion of a horse race held in honor of Diadumenianus' birthday. The people are declaring Jupiter alone as their own leader by raising their hands to heaven – that is, where the leader of the Roman gods resides (79[78].20.2):

> τόν τε Δία ἀνεκάλουν ὡς δὴ καὶ μόνον σφῶν ἡγησόμενον, καὶ δὴ καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο εἶπον ὅτι "ὡς κύριος ὠργίσθης, ὡς πατὴρ ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς". οὐδὲ ἐφρόντισαν οὐδὲν τὴν πρώτην οὔτε τοῦ ἱππικοῦ οὔτε τοῦ βουλευτικοῦ τε.... τόν τε αὐτοκράτορα καὶ τὸν Καίσαρα ἐπαινούντων, ὥστε καὶ αὐ.... ἑλληνιστὶ εἰπεῖν "ὦ καλῆς ἡμέρας τῆς τήμερον, ὦ καλῶν βασιλέων", κἀκείνους καὶ ὁμοφρονεῖν σφισιν ἐθελόντων· ἀλλ' ἔς τε τὸν οὐρανὸν τὰς χεῖρας ἀνέτεινον καὶ ἐβόων "οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Ῥωμαίων Αὔγουστος· τοῦτον ἔχοντες πάντα ἔχομεν."

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very things of which we accuse them'" (ἀπεῖπε γὰρ ἄντικρυς μηδένα αὐτῶν θανατωθῆναι, αὐτὸ τοῦτο γράψας 'ἵνα μή, ἃ ἐκείνοις ἐγκαλοῦμεν, αὐτοὶ ποιοῦντες φανῶμεν'). Cf. 74[73].8.5 on Pertinax.

50 Cass. Dio 76[75].7.4 = Xiph. 308.4–6: "He [i.e. Severus] caused us especial dismay by constantly styling himself the son of Marcus and the brother of Commodus and by bestowing divine honours upon the latter, whom but recently he had been abusing" (μάλιστα δ' ἡμᾶς ἐξέπληξεν ὅτι τοῦ τε Μάρκου υἱὸν καὶ τοῦ Κομμόδου ἀδελφὸν ἑαυτὸν ἔλεγε, τῷ τε Κομμόδῳ, ὃν πρῴην ὕβριζεν, ἡρωικὰς ἐδίδου τιμάς). Cf. Herodian 2.10.3; 2.14.3.

51 Cass. Dio 79[78].19.1: "But presently they learned that Aurelianus was dead and that Diadumenianus, the son of Macrinus, had been appointed Caesar, – nominally by the soldiers, through whose ranks he passed when summoned from Antioch to meet his father, but really by Macrinus, – and had also taken the name of Antoninus" (ὡς μέντοι τόν τε Αὐρηλιανὸν τεθνηκότα καὶ τὸν Διαδουμενιανὸν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ Καίσαρα, λόγῳ μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν στρατιωτῶν δι' ὧν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀντιοχείας μεταπεμφθεὶς πρὸς αὐτὸν διῄει, ἔργῳ δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Μακρίνου, ἀποδεδειγμένον καὶ προσέτι τὸ τοῦ Ἀντωνίνου ὄνομα προσειληφότα ἔμαθον). Cf. Herodian 5.3.12, 5.4.4; Aur. Vict. 22.2. For the dating, see Kienast, Eck & Heil 2017, 164.

52 On Dio's response to Macrinus' equestrian status, see Davenport 2012, 196–202, and Allen in this volume.

> And they called upon Jupiter, declaring that he alone should be their leader and adding these very words: "As a master thou wert angry, as a father take pity on us." Nor would they pay any heed at first to either the equestrian or the senatorial order who were … praising the emperor and the Caesar, to the extent of saying … in Greek: "Oh, what a glorious day is this! What noble rulers!" and desiring the others, too, to agree with them. But the crowd raised their hands toward heaven and exclaimed: "Yonder is the Romans' Augustus; having him, we have everything."

Dio may be the source of the *HA* for the episode, though in general, he does not seem to be frequently used – in particular for the *Vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenianus, which may rather depend on Herodian and Aurelius Victor, and on the redactor's own elaboration.[53] Jacques Schwartz noted the coincidence many years ago and was later followed by Chastagnol.[54] Still, nobody seems to have yet pointed out some significant differences in contents and in context. First, the *HA* replaces the name "Augustus" with "Antoninus". Secondly, in the *HA*, the soldiers are acclaiming Diadumenianus. On the contrary, in Dio's text, the people in Rome are protesting against Diadumenianus as the prospective emperor and evoking Jupiter as the only and supreme Augustus of the Romans instead. Jupiter's primacy also implies that they are polemically disqualifying Macrinus as an illegitimate Augustus.[55] Also understood in the demonstration of the people of Rome is that the title "Augustus" does not apply to such inadequate men as Macrinus and Diadumenianus – or to any emperor at all, as it seems possible to imply from such a solemn invocation of Jupiter.

Of course, it is quite easy to maintain that Dio is providing a basically accurate version and that the *HA* is elaborating on a fictitious variation. That being said, all such discrepancies may well depend on different source material. In actuality, what both sources have in common is a reference to a canonical formula: πάντα ἔχομεν in Dio, *omnia habemus* in the *HA*. As Burgersdijk noted, the expression directs all one's affection towards a man.[56] This is also true for a god, and it is especially interesting that the *HA* connects the name Antoninus to the religious level as the final acclamation to Diadumenianus

53 Turcan 1993, 39; Chastagnol 1994, lix–lxiii, lxvi–lxviii, 448, 471–472. On a (at least) partial dependence of the *HA* from Dio's text see Mecella 2016, 44–48.

54 Schwartz 1970, 154–155; Chastagnol 1994, lxi, 476n.2.

55 I am inclined to agree with Scott 2018, 66, who, by recalling Yavetz's idea (1969, 5), suggests that the behavior of the plebs (respectfully called δῆμος at 79[78].20.1) reflects Dio's hostility towards the emperor.

56 Burgersdijk 2010, 150 n. 463, who adds the examples of Luc. 3.108; Auson. *Grat. Act.* 3.13.

ends with such a solemn note (*Diad.* 1.8:): "An Antoninus, indeed, have the gods granted to us" (*Antoninum nobis di dederunt*). According to Burgersdijk, this is symptomatic of the literary elaboration of the *nomen Antoninorum* theme in the *HA*. However, the comparison with Dio's account shows that the people of Rome denied the legitimacy of both Diadumenianus and his father. In its turn, the account of the *HA* mirrors the lack of intrinsic strength in the imperial title, as an Antoninus is much more needed than an Augustus. If so, the *HA* uses the *nomen Antoninorum* theme in order to make literarily explicit a historical issue that is implied in Dio's account.

This allows us to infer that, despite all discrepancies, both sources paint an overall consistent scenario. The title "Augustus" was inadequate to legitimize those who held supreme power, nor was the name "Antoninus" capable of guaranteeing more effectiveness. The rise of Elagabalus made things even more complicated. When he obtained the name Antoninus (May 16, 218 CE), Macrinus reacted with disdain.[57] For Dio, Elagabalus was eager to emphasize the equivalence between being Antoninus and being Augustus (80[79].1.3):

> πολλὰ δὲ καὶ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ οὐχ ὅτι τοῖς στρατιώταις ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇ βουλῇ τῷ τε δήμῳ καθυπισχνούμενος (κατά τε γὰρ τὸν τοῦ Αὐγούστου, ᾧ καὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀφωμοίου, καὶ κατὰ τὸν τοῦ Ἀντωνίνου τοῦ Μάρκου ζῆλον ἅπαντα ἅπαξ πράξειν ἐπηγγείλατο.)
>
> About himself he [i.e. Elagabalus] made many promises, not only to the soldiers but also to the senate and to the people, asserting that he would always and in all things emulate Augustus, to whose youth he likened his own, and Marcus Antoninus.[58]

57 Cass. Dio 79[78].32.2–3: "For they carried Avitus [i.e. Elagabalus], whom they were already styling Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, round about upon the ramparts, and exhibited some likenesses of Caracallus when a child as bearing some resemblance to the boy … and surrendered themselves and their arms to the False Antoninus" (τόν τε γὰρ Ἀουῖτον, ὃν Μᾶρκον Αὐρήλιον Ἀντωνῖνον ἤδη προσηγόρευον, περιφέροντες ὑπὲρ τοῦ τείχους, καὶ εἰκόνας τινὰς τοῦ Καρακάλλου παιδικὰς ὡς καὶ προσφερεῖς αὐτῷ ἀποδεικνύντες. […] ἑαυτοὺς ⟨δὲ⟩ τά τε ὅπλα τῷ Ψευδαντωνίνῳ παραδοῦναι); 79[78].36.1: "Macrinus wrote also to the Senate about the False Antoninus in the same strain as he did to the governors everywhere, calling him a boy and claiming that he was mad" (ὁ δὲ δὴ Μακρῖνος ἔγραψε μὲν καὶ τῇ βουλῇ περὶ τοῦ Ψευδαντωνίνου ὅσα καὶ τοῖς ἑκασταχόθι ἄρχουσι, παιδίον τέ τι ἀποκαλῶν αὐτὸν καὶ ἔμπληκτον εἶναι λέγων). Cf. Auson. *Caes.* tetrasticha 24 *Antoninus Heliogabalus*, 96–97. See Kienast, Eck & Heil 2017, 165.

58 See Scott 2013 & 2018, 113–114.

Behind Elagabalus' claim, it is quite easy to see the influence of the entourage surrounding him. However, his disgrace and the accession of Severus Alexander (March 14, 222 CE) prove that the name "Antoninus" was still involved in the legitimacy problem.[59] As reported by Dio, the fall of Elagabalus was fostered by his being antithetical to the Antonine model (80[79].19.4 = Xiph. 353.27–30):

> καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἡ τήθη αὐτοῦ ἐμίσει τε αὐτὸν ἐφ' οἷς ἔπραττεν, ὡς οὐδὲ τοῦ Ἀντωνίνου υἱὸν ὄντα, καὶ πρὸς τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ὡς καὶ ὄντως ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγονότα ἀπέκλινε.
>
> Even his grandmother [i.e. Julia Maesa] hated him [i.e., Elagabalus] because of his deeds, which seemed to show that he was not the son of Antoninus at all, and was coming to favour Alexander [Severus], as being really sprung from him [i.e. Caracalla].

Dio's passage makes it clear that being the son of Antoninus entailed certain expectations. The Antoninus alluded to is Elagabalus' alleged father, Caracalla – that is, not exactly the ideal Antoninus, but an official Antoninus nevertheless, and certainly the last legitimate one. To bear the name "Antoninus", more than the title "Augustus", made the difference. That may also explain why Dio's extant text puts emphasis on Elagabalus' false pretense by abundant, if not systematic, use of the nickname Ψευδαντωνῖνος (Pseudantoninus), of a patently disparaging tone. The Severan dynasty thus degenerated into illegitimacy – that is, to put it in Kemezis' words, into violation of hierarchical order.[60] Julia

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59 On the political events driving to the fall of Elagabalus, and on our main sources (Dio, Herodian and the *HA*), see in detail Kemezis 2016; cf. Scott 2018, 109–110. On the day of Severus Alexander's accession see Kienast, Eck & Heil 2017, 171.

60 Cass. Dio 79[78].32.3, 34.4, 35.1, 36.1, 37.2, 38.1–2, 39.4, 39.6, 40.2; 80.1.1, 7.3. Dio's use may be confirmed in the final segment of the *Roman History*: 80[79].12.2[2] = *Exc. Val.* 409; 80[79].17.1 = Petr. Pat. *Exc. Vat.* 152; 80[79].18.5 = Petr. Pat. *Exc. Vat.* 154; 80[79].19.1[a] = Petr. Pat. *Exc. Vat.* 155. The passage at 80.1.1 is particularly interesting as it opens book 80 with a whole set of disparaging nicknames, a part of Pseudantoninus and beside Elagabalus' alleged "real" name Ἀουῖτος (Avitus): Ἀσσύριος (the Assyrian), Σαρδανάπαλλος (Sardanapalus), Τιβερῖνος (Tiberinus). That "Pseudantoninus" is Dio's preference is shown by the *pinax* which has been preserved at the beginning of the book, where Pseudantoninus is mentioned four times against once for Avitus and twice for Elagabalus, which is only used to a minor extent (seven times between books 79[78] and 80). Cf. Osgood 2016; Scott 2018, 111–112; Scott 2020, 349; also, see Kemezis 2020, 281. In the *HA* "Pseudantoninus" occurs only once, as the nickname that Elagabalus attributed to Diadumenianus (*HA Heliog.* 8.4). Chastagnol 1994, 514 n. 1, commenting on the passage seems to suggest that the information is reliable. Further nicknames are nonetheless attributed to Elagabalus in

Maesa, the influential grandmother of Elagabalus, preferred to turn her favour to Severus Alexander.

Nonetheless, the immediate consequences of the fall of Elagabalus seemingly contradict this state of affairs. On the one hand, indeed, the name "Antoninus" was frequently erased from public inscriptions.[61] On the other hand, Severus Alexander did not assume the name "Antoninus".[62] The reason was that Elagabalus had utterly discredited it, whereas Severus Alexander revered "Antoninus" as a sacred name. Besides, the name he assumed instead, "Alexander", was one his alleged father Caracalla had cared for.[63] Of course, such reverence toward names – and its effects, either positive (for "Augustus") or negative (for "Antoninus") – depended entirely upon Severus Alexander's entourage. His grandmother, Julia Maesa, and his mother, Julia Mamaea, were undoubtedly his mentors. They directed the official line, which could not but aim at promoting Severus Alexander as a better ruler.[64]

4 Conclusion

The aim of Severus Alexander's entourage was to neutralize a critical situation, where bloodline – genuine or artificial – and imperial titulature were deeply intertwined. By refusing the name "Antoninus", Severus Alexander and his entourage put an end to what had proven to be a *longue-durée* issue affecting the process of legitimizing imperial authority since the death of Commodus. As I have tried to show in this article, at the beginning of the process Septimius Severus probably envisaged the name "Antoninus" as a way to revive the formal

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the *HA* (*Heliog.* 2.1–2: *Varius*, explained as a wordplay for "sprung from the seed of various men"; 17.5: *Tractatitius*,"the Dragged", *Inpurus* "the Filthy").

61 See, e.g., *CIL* 3.6170; 6.2001; 8.2564; 8.10304; 8.10347; 10.6002; *ILS* 472; *HA Heliog.* 17.4; *Alex.* 1.2; Arrizabalaga y Prado 2010, 118–119; Calomino 2016, 159–164. As for evidence on papyri referring to official documents, see de Jong 2007, 104–105. The *damnatio* panorama is not always consistent, though: see especially the case of Diadumenianus (with "Antoninus" left in place, "Opellius" and "Diadumenianus" erased): e.g., *CIL* 14.4393 (from Ostia); *ILJug* 2.737 (from Dalmatia); *AE* 1968, 591 and *CIL* 8.21993 (from Africa Proconsularis); *AE* 2009, 1527 (from Cappadocia). An exception (all names erased) is *HEp* 1997, 394 (from Hispania citerior).

62 On Severus Alexander's refusal, from the specific angle of the *HA*, see Hartke 1951, 137–138.

63 See Cass. Dio 79[78].19.2; Scott 2018, 64. On Alexander the Great as a model inspiring Caracalla, and on its impact on Severus Alexander see Pownall in this volume.

64 On the crucial influence of these Syrian women, and especially of Julia Maesa, in Severan politics between Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, see, e.g., Herodian 5.8.10–6.1.1; Cleve 1988, 85–113; Scott 2018, 145, and Bertolazzi in this volume.

validity of the imperial office, which had been undermined by multiple factors: Commodus, the death of Pertinax, the accession of Didius Julianus, and the civil war. Severus aimed to be not only a new Augustus[65] but also a new Antoninus – a new Pius, but especially a new Marcus Aurelius. Nonetheless, parity between the two names within the imperial titulature was only utopian. It could not be achieved as "Augustus" remained primary in conferring legitimacy, but the legitimizing influence of "Antoninus" was durable. In this respect, the *HA* adequately reflects its scope. It does so through the Senate's acclamation of the last of the Severans, who not only refused to hold "Antoninus" as a title – and did so by equating it to the names of such exemplary emperors of the past as Vespasian, Titus and Trajan – but preferred to be called "Alexander" (*Alex. Sev.* 10.2–3):

> *"Si enim Antonini nomen accipio, possum et Traiani, possum et Titi, possum et Vespasiani." et cum diceret, adclamatum est: "quomodo Augustus, sic et Antoninus."*
>
> "If indeed I take the name of Antoninus, I may take also the name of Trajan, the name of Titus, and the name of Vespasian." And when he had spoken, there were acclamations: "As you are now Augustus, so also be Antoninus."

The emphasis on the Senate inviting Severus Alexander to hold a title he would never accept reveals part of the problem. But Dio's allusions and omissions regarding so much of the political role of the name "Antoninus" reveal another part. Paradoxically, indeed, we may assume that in so concluding our investigation we have returned straight back to the starting point: If the name "Augustus" was inadequate to secure legitimacy, the name "Antoninus" secured it to an even lesser degree. It generated instability. Such instability persisted many years after the Severan period, partly due to a well-known, intrinsic and increasing weakness of the principate. The legitimacy of the imperial office was formally in the hands of the Senate, but the emperor was practically in the hands of the army. Significantly, the end of the Severan period coincided with the accession of Maximinus, a direct expression of the army's wish. From Maximinus onward, imperial titulature was more and more granted by the Senate under the coercion of a constant military menace – another important theme in the *HA*, and indeed a crucial political issue in the 4th and

65 Zecchini 2016, 122.

5th centuries CE.[66] This could not but make official names less potent, and even less binding, than they used to be.

What remained, in the end, was the long-established, customary *nomen Augustum*, and the *nomen Antoninorum* may be regarded as the story of a failed title. Of such a failure, Dio is an excellent witness. If we accept that Dio finished the *Roman History* under Severus Alexander, that would imply a time when talking or – perhaps even worse – writing anything about such a sensitive issue as the name "Antoninus" openly might have been – at least – rather impolite. The more so, if Letta is right in maintaining that Dio worked on the *Roman History* between 211 and 233/234 CE and that the peak of Dio's fortune was under Severus Alexander, after an eclipse from 195 to 217 CE due to serious tensions under Septimius Severus and Caracalla with the emperors and the Praetorian Guard.[67]

In this respect, it is possible to add another paradox, which is, however, only apparent. It may be incidental that the consul of 223 CE, Marius Maximus, is often identified as the principal source of the *HA* for the Severan period – with the exception of the *Vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenianus. Admittedly, the identification of Marius Maximus as the principal *HA* source is a matter of much dispute.[68] However that may be, once we concede that the historical Marius Maximus coincides with the alleged principal source of the *HA*, we must conclude that he was a rival of Dio at a literary level, because he was a biographer, but also politically, as seems to have been the case.[69] The emphasis on the name "Antoninus" in the *HA* may perfectly fit the need of a biographer, who necessarily devotes his attention to great stories pivoting on great names and individuals, and, if necessary, emphasizes history to make it appealing to his readers. It is plausible that no political subject matter greater than

66 See, e.g., *HA Gall.* 1–5; *Tac.* 8.3–5; 9.1; 12.1; *Carus* 1.3; 5.4; 7.1. See also Aur. Vict. 33.23–24, 33–34 on Gallienus and his connivance with the army.

67 Letta 2019, 175–177, reaffirms his 1979 opinion, which was followed by Barnes 1984 among others. Letta thinks that the *Roman History* was finished but left partially unrevised due to Dio's death probably shortly after Severus Alexander's. See also Kaldellis 2017, 53. According to Letta, Dio's work was published under Philip the Arab (though he does not explain why). On Dio's career see Letta 2019, 163–171 (*contra* Markov 2016). Further thoughts about Dio's career and the date of composition of the *Roman History* in Scott 2017, 18–20; Scott 2018, 10–14.

68 Chastagnol 1994; lii–lix; Birley 1995 & 1997; Molinier-Arbò 2009; Rohrbacher 2013. Either skeptical or overtly against are, e.g., Syme 1968, 1971, 121–128, & 1972; Paschoud 1996 & 1999; Bertrand-Dagenbach 2004.

69 Kemezis 2012, 406–414; Molin 2016a, 443; Christol 2016, 448–457.

the name "Antoninus" was available for the declining Severan period, nothing more desirable to the taste of an increasingly biography-oriented audience.[70]

But where is the paradox? Why would Marius Maximus have been able to compose a work with such emphasis on the *nomen Antoninorum*, while his contemporary Dio did not do so? The major difference may consist in the genres they opted for. They had divergent literary pedigrees. Historiography – either traditionally annalistic or, as with Dio, not entirely traditional as shown by Pelling especially for the early imperial Books of the *Roman History*[71] – was committed to respecting given measures and tones, in accordance with as austere a manner as possible. Biography, on the other hand, was rather unbounded. It aimed to fascinate. It inclined to gossip. It approached entertainment. Consequently, it often altered reality. Thus, discredit fell on biographers based on a perceived inferiority, unreliability and distance from noble historiography. From Suetonius to the *HA*, this tendency developed progressively. That being the case, a biographer was free to say much more than a historian. Marius Maximus may have been able to elaborate on the *nomen Antoninorum* issue and keep his own reputation safe, while Dio would not have been. On the contrary, Dio would have been particularly exposed to the risk of being discredited, as a senator and as a historian, if treating such a delicate matter under Severus Alexander. Discredit, for the ambitions of a senator-historian, was a serious problem. No grand matter such as that of a glorious name and a failed imperial title – still hot when Dio was finishing his monumental work – could overcome the need to stay safe and let the *Roman History* circulate properly.

The risk of censorship was not unrealistic, as Dio himself likely knew. This may be suggested by the fact that Dio's senator-historian commitment is central in the *Roman History*, as Kemezis argues in this volume.[72] Hence what seems to be operating as Dio's self-censorship on the vicissitudes of the

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70 Marincola 1997, 32–33 separates Latin and Greek historical writing for the period comprising the death of Tacitus (early second century) and the publication of Ammianus' work (late fourth century), and maintains that Greek historians, including Dio, generally followed the long-established tradition of continuous history. Nevertheless, this does not imply that Dio's work was not influenced by biography. See further below.

71 Pelling 1997 focuses on Dio's historiographical technique presenting the Julio-Claudian emperors, which merges annalistic and biographical elements on different but interconnected narrative levels. His assumptions are nonetheless valid throughout the *Roman History*. See also Swain 1997, 24–25 and Devillers 2016, who limits his attention to Dio's focus on the Julio-Claudian emperors as well, and elaborates on the evolution of the annalistic format of the *Roman History* through a comparison between Dio and Tacitus. Kemezis 2014, 90–149 expands the analysis of Dio's annalistic method to the whole set of the imperial Books.

72 See chapter 15.

name "Antoninus" may be seen as Dio's practical countermeasure to prevent a concrete political and reputational danger. We may in fact speak of a calculated self-censorship, which is in no contradiction with Dio's criticism of the Severan dynasty in the final books of the *Roman History*. Whereas Dio's criticism crucially pivots on the abasement of the Senate by the emperors – a *Leitmotiv* of his imperial books – his self-censorship reflects the legitimacy issue, that is *the* issue when Dio was still composing his work.[73] The two things must be kept distinct. Imperial legitimacy was an even more complicated problem than that of an emperor's political misbehavior towards the Senate since it concerned *both* the imperial house and the Senate. Thus, it was *both* a private and a public problem, and should the senator-historian's commitment interfere with such delicate affairs, that would have been no easy task to engage with in the *Roman History*. Circumspection and silence were probably the safest solution.[74]

Despite this state of affairs, Dio's attention to the meaning of the name "Augustus" and his cautiousness on the *nomen Antoninorum* seem to be two sides of the same coin. This by no means implies that the elaboration of the *HA* is entirely genuine, but it can hardly be entirely dismissed. The presence of the name "Antoninus" is certainly emphasized as the genre demands. The redactor of the *HA* is likely to have emphasized it even further on his own, as he could not rely on Marius Maximus for the *Vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenianus. Aurelius Victor might have inspired him to some extent.[75]

73 On Dio's elaboration on the abasement of the Senate see, e.g., Pistellato 2021.

74 On Dio's mix of reticence and resentment in the Severan books, see Madsen 2016, 136–137, 154–158; Rantala 2016, 165–176; Madsen 2018. See also Scott 2017, 17, commenting on Dio's other way to secure his safety, when under Septimius Severus he produced his two laudatory pamphlets about the emperor. On author safety and book circulation, see Kaldellis 2017, 52–53, who has an optimistic view of Dio's position – that of a retired elderly senator in good terms with the young emperor (Severus Alexander) and his "senatorial handlers", who "may have been less interested in literary repression, and probably did not want to leave a trail of murdered writers for their charges to inherit." For a general survey on book censorship, see Rohmann 2013, and Howley 2017, 229–231, who also focuses on Dio's attention to the history of book-burning, and quite abundantly of letter-burning.

75 Apart from Marius Maximus, Turcan 1993, 8–10 believes that the so-called *Enmannsche Kaisergeschichte* (*EKG*) might have offered additional material in the first part of Macrinus' *Vita*, whereas for Diadumenianus' *Vita* he has the impression that the redactor of the *HA* lacks any sort of information – including Marius Maximus (43). Chastagnol 1994, xlix–l, 448, 471–472, has in mind a similar picture though he does not insist too much on the *EKG*, and explicitly thinks that the redactor of the *HA* invented additional elements taking the cue from Aur. Vict. 22.2: *Quibus eo quod ingens amissi principis desiderium erat, adolescentem Antoninum uocauere* ("Because of their great grief for the emperor [i.e. Caracalla] they had lost, the soldiers called the young man [i.e. Diadumenianus] Antoninus"). Cf. *HA Carac.* 8.10, which may have been inserted after the redaction of Macrinus' *Vita* (Chastagnol 1994, l).

Moreover, the literary game we find in the *HA* was probably made possible by a double-distance factor, which brings us back to one of the final points sketched in the introduction to this article. On the one hand, for the redactor of the *HA*, the issue of the name "Antoninus" was a sort of cold case which in its own right allowed for exaggeration and invention. On the other hand, the game was perhaps inspired by events that were close in time to the redaction of the *HA*, which may have fashioned the *nomen Antoninorum* theme in its exaggerated form – regardless of the precise time when the *HA* was last edited. A possible clue may help our understanding of the matter. It is clear that the question of imperial names was a live issue in the late empire. One example is the transformation of the name "Flavius" into a *praenomen* from the 4th to the 6th century CE. Cameron interpreted it as a "nicety of protocol" in vogue among the Eastern elites striving for imperial legitimacy.[76] In this respect, the occasional mention of "Antoninus" itself as *praenomen* in the *Vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenianus (again) may reveal the editorial attention to a topic which was likely familiar to the *HA* audience.[77] In addition, it may be worth remembering that at that time people were also very familiar with another topic: usurpers.[78] This appears significant, given that the *Vitae* of Macrinus and Diadumenianus deal with non-senatorial rulers.

Furthermore, the very distance which separates the *HA* from Dio's *Roman History* may offer a narrative key to our interpretation of the problem. It is a double distance in itself, which entails two great advantages: time and genre. Being removed in time makes it easier to narrate things, but the narration is much easier when hot issues are treated by a biographer. This has strong implications if we believe that the Marius Maximus mentioned in the *HA* was the main source of the *HA* for the *nomen Antoninorum* and that he coincides with the historical Marius Maximus contemporary to Dio.[79]

If we admit that this scenario is credible, we may suppose that the *Vitae* which most likely do not depend on Marius Maximus would further elaborate on the same question to produce an effective running theme. Engaged in his historiographical tailoring, the redactor of the *HA* would have made the *nomen Antoninorum* theme even more consistent for the sake of his narrative project, winking at a presumably interested audience. This relates to the *HA*, though, and to questions from a much later timeframe that exceeds the range

76 Cameron 1988. See also Syme 1971, 84; Turcan 1993, 150.

77 *HA Macr. 3.5, Diad.* 6.3–6; see especially Hartke 1951, 123–132.

78 See in general Humphries 2015, and in particular for the *HA* Haake 2015.

79 The question remains open (nn. 7 & 8 above). Callu 1992, xiv–xvi, would have probably – if not certainly – agreed; Paschoud 1996, xxx–xxxii, would probably – if not certainly – disagree.

of this study. Instead, the basics of the *nomen Antoninorum* issue as known from the *HA* are entirely related to the time of Dio. In other words, Dio's very cautious reticence, which we may interpret as self-censorship, while aiming to safeguard his political and literary dignity, reveals the political issue, that behind the discredited phantasmagoria of the *HA* literary theme remains just concealed.

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PART 2

Rome and the Imperial Court

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CHAPTER 6

Contested Constructions: Cassius Dio and the Framing of Female Participation as Builders

Karin S. Tate

τὴν Ῥώμην γηίνην παραλαβὼν λιθίνην ὑμῖν καταλείπω.

I found Rome of clay; I leave it to you of marble.
CASS. DIO, 56.30.4[1]

This famous line, attributed to Augustus, is more than mere hyperbole, for once he had consolidated his powers Augustus financed the restoration or construction of public buildings on a scale that would not be duplicated until the Severans. Indeed, Augustus' attention to building set the standard for imperial intervention in public construction. Under the Republic, building in the city of Rome had been something only the well-connected and powerful could do, while under the empire, it was the sole prerogative of the emperor and his closest friends and family. Public structures as displays – of wealth, status, and agency – have received increasing scholarly attention in the last few decades as scholars debate the meaning and significance of imperial structures and their collocation one to another.[2] These debates, as important as they are, however, are premised on how we interpret the texts that discuss these structures. This article addresses questions raised by Cassius Dio's text regarding two Augustan structures in Rome: the Porticus Liviae, a new build situated on the Esquiline Hill overlooking the Clivus Suburanus, and the restored Porticus Metelli in the Circus Flaminius, renamed the Porticus Octaviae for Augustus' sister, the pious Octavia. The problem being addressed is seemingly small: Who paid for these structures? But the debate also concerns larger issues such as how Dio may have referenced earlier texts to comment on the political situation of his day.

1 Texts and translations of Dio are taken from Cary's edition (Loeb Classical Library, 1914–1927).
2 See n. 7 below for a brief list.

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According to Cassius Dio, Augustus was responsible for these projects as part of his program of building patronage but named them for his wife and sister. In a brief aside in book 49, Dio states that Augustus restored the Porticus Metelli and built libraries within it using proceeds from his Dalmatian campaign.[3] The Porticus Liviae receives slightly more extensive treatment when, in book 55, after relating Augustus' inheritance from his former protégé, Vedius Pollio, Cassius Dio tells his readers that Augustus had Pollio's urban villa at Rome torn down and replaced with a vast portico that he named for his wife, Livia.[4] The issue is that with the sole exception of Suetonius, Cassius Dio is alone in claiming that these were Augustus' contributions to Rome's public space. This is striking, especially since more contemporaneous sources, the Elder Pliny, Festus, Strabo, and Ovid, all attribute the buildings in question to the women whose names they bear. The fact that we readily accept Dio and Suetonius' version of events while ignoring these other sources should alert us to challenges implicit not only in the ancient texts but in our own assumptions as well. After all, when we consider the implications of building in the city of Rome, both during the reign of Augustus and during Dio's lifetime, we understand this was an act fraught with meaning, since funding a public building bespoke one's wealth and social standing and formed one's public reputation. As a major contribution to the city on behalf of the wealthy individual, building positioned that person as a public benefactor, a fact exploited by all emperors, though to varying extents. We may assume, then, that when undertaken by female members of the imperial house this sort of public action risked being perceived as intruding on the masculine world of public agency or on the emperor's prerogative as a public benefactor. And yet, the tendency is to take Dio and Suetonius at face value and to assume, often with reference to the traditional circumscription of women's public action at Rome, that they

3 Cass. Dio 49.43.8: ἐπειδή τε οἱ Δελμάται παντελῶς ἐκεχείρωντο, τάς τε στοὰς ἀπὸ τῶν λαφύρων αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς ἀποθήκας τῶν βιβλίων τὰς Ὀκταουιανὰς ἐπὶ τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτοῦ κληθείσας κατεσκεύασεν ("And after the Dalmatians had been utterly subjugated, he erected from the spoils thus gained the porticos and the libraries called the Octavian, after his sister").

4 Pollio had made Augustus his principal heir, stipulating in his will that some monument should be built to him (Pollio) in the city. Instead, Augustus destroyed Pollio's luxury villa (now his own property). The Porticus Liviae was built in its stead. Cass. Dio 54.23.5–6: ὁ οὖν Αὔγουστος τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ ἐς ἔδαφος προφάσει τῆς ἐκείνου κατασκευῆς, ὅπως μηδὲν μνημόσυνον ἐν τῇ πόλει ἔχῃ, καταβαλὼν περίστῳον ᾠκοδομήσατο, καὶ οὐ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ τοῦ Πωλίωνος ἀλλὰ τὸ τῆς Λιουίας ἐπέγραψεν ("Augustus razed Pollio's house to the ground, on the pretext of preparing for the erection of the other structure, but really with the purpose that Pollio should have no monument in the city; and he built a colonnade, inscribing on it the name, not of Pollio, but of Livia").

must be correct.[5] This article argues, however, that despite an apparent agreement in Suetonius and Dio's texts, the lack of clear evidence in support of their claim should caution us against accepting it uncritically and that we should, therefore, entertain other possibilities, including the deliberate elision of these women's public roles as builders with Augustus' own building programme in order to better suit a shared narrative purpose.

First, though, it is necessary to establish the context. This article begins, therefore, with a description of the buildings in question and their symbolic import for the imperial family. Dio's potential motivations for ascribing agency to Augustus instead of the women are then set within a long-standing rhetorical tradition that aimed at encapsulating the ruler's character through his actions and frequently represented the lack of public action on the part of the women in his household as further proof of his adherence to Roman tradition.[6] At the heart of the issue, however, is the question of whether Dio was thinking of the Severan women when he was writing about the women closest to Augustus. After all, Dio was looking back at Augustan Rome through the lens of his own experience, and this must have influenced his perception of that earlier time, including who was allowed to build. It is true that every history is a creation of the period during which it was composed, but it is nevertheless important to understand the ideology that underpinned Dio's work because his biases inform our own understanding of ancient Rome and, in particular, the place and role(s) of women in it.

1 Building in the City

It is now generally understood that monumental public buildings in ancient Rome symbolized power. Public building was a tool that served self-promotion

5 Van Bremen 1996 is frequently cited with regards to the epigraphic evidence for female participation in the public sphere, yet her focus was the Greek east where the social context was arguably different. See Hemelrijk 2015 for the western Roman context. For other discussions of women's activity as builders in the western empire, see Woodhull 2003; Donahue 2004 (Roman Spain); Basso 2005; Cooley 2013, Cascella 2013; Woodhull 2018/2019.

6 As Pliny does with regards to Trajan in his *Panegyricus*. See Plin. *Pan.* 83.5–8, where he extols the virtues of Trajan's wife, Plotina, which she possessed, according to Pliny, because she imitated Trajan's virtues; likewise, at 84.1–5, Pliny praises the emperor for the public and private behaviour of his sister, Marciana. Dio arguably displays this same mindset multiple times in his *Roman History* (for example, at 68.5, he affirms that Plotina behaved in a blameless fashion throughout her husband's reign). For discussions of the literary and rhetorical tradition, see Carlon 2009, 138–185 and especially, as regards the Severans, Langford 2013, 87–93.

and political ambition and communicated the magnificence of Rome.[7] To the Romans, where and what an emperor built in the capital revealed his moral orientation and alignment with regards to civic and personal life. Gowing has noted that this assumption is apparent in Dio, who represented building in Rome as symbolic of positive and negative uses of power, especially with respect to the emperors and their building programs.[8] Dio depicts building in the city as one measure of an emperor's merit. Dio's Augustus, as the prototypical benevolent ruler, possesses an attitude towards administration that inspires him to suppress chaos and establish order and peace, both actually and figuratively through his various building projects.[9] In Dio's Augustan narrative, building signals initiative and restoration, which allows Dio to draw parallels to Augustus' political aims; we see this in both the Porticus Liviae and the Porticus Octaviae. Dio evokes an Augustus who sheathed Rome in marble because he saw that the city needed to be worthy of the prominence implied by its possession of the empire.[10] The question here is why Dio would attribute the Porticus Liviae and Porticus Octaviae to Augustus when Pliny, Festus, Strabo, and Ovid all suggest that we ought to ascribe them to the women whose names they bore. First, however, it is necessary at this point to examine the structures in question before proceeding with a discussion of Dio's narrative.

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7 Boatwright 1987; Favro 1996; Gorrie 1997; Gowing 2016, 127; Rehak 2006; Thomas 2007; Hölscher 2009, 311–313; Zanker 1988, esp. 135–145 on select Augustan building projects, including the Porticus Liviae, and their impact; Jenkyns 2013, 111–141.

8 Gowing 2016, 119 and 127 with n. 14. Among the questions that mattered were whether the emperor built for the people or misused his power and overwrote public spaces with private ones. Did the emperor's mark on the city make a *useful* contribution, or was it purely self-aggrandizing? Note, in Suetonius, the tone with which building in the city is discussed in *Aug.* 28 compared to, for example, *Ner.* 31.

9 Swan 2004, 14.

10 "At any rate, from this or some other cause he became ill, and sending for his associates, he told them all his wishes, adding finally: 'I found Rome of clay; I leave it to you of marble.' He did not thereby refer literally to the appearance of its buildings, but rather to the strength of the empire" (Cass. Dio 56.30.4: εἴτ᾽ οὖν ἐκ τούτου εἴτε καὶ ἄλλως ἀρρωστήσας τούς τε ἑταίρους συνεκάλεσε, καὶ εἰπὼν αὐτοῖς ὅσα ἔχρῃζε, τέλος ἔφη ὅτι "τὴν Ῥώμην γηίνην παραλαβὼν λιθίνην ὑμῖν καταλείπω." τοῦτο μὲν οὖν οὐ πρὸς τὸ τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων αὐτῆς ἀκριβὲς ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἰσχυρὸν ἐνεδείξατο). Similarly, in the famous speech of Maecenas to Augustus, the necessity of making Rome more physically splendid is emphasized: "For it is fitting that we who rule over many people should surpass all men in all things, and brilliance of this sort also tends in a way to inspire our allies with respect for us and our enemies with terror" (Cass. Dio 52.30.1: προσήκει τε γὰρ ἡμᾶς πολλῶν ἄρχοντας ἐν πᾶσι πάντων ὑπερέχειν, καὶ φέρει πως καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πρός τε τοὺς συμμάχους αἰδῶ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους κατάπληξιν).

2 The Structures

Each of these buildings was a *quadriporticus* or four-sided public portico consisting of colonnades that enclosed a very large rectangular open space containing a temple or temples. The Porticus Octaviae measured roughly 132 × 119 m (almost 16,000 m^2 or 172,000 sq. ft.) and enclosed the temples of Juno Regina and Jupiter Stator.[11] The Porticus Liviae stood at roughly 120 × 95 m (11,400 m^2 or 122,708 sq. ft.) and included a shrine to Concordia, commissioned by Livia, which she dedicated to Augustus.[12] The circumstances of the (re)construction of these two porticos are, in spite of each having been arguably financed by a woman, *not* identical, as each structure held associations particular to its historical context and physical location.

The Porticus Octaviae was near the northern boundary of the Circus Flaminius, a portion of the Campus Martius populated with victory temples and through which triumphal parades passed. Dio, in Book 49, states that Augustus used the spoils of his Dalmatian campaign to build this portico, but he appears to have confused it with a different structure, the Porticus Octavia, which Augustus mentions in his *Res Gestae*, noting that he allowed the portico to retain the name of its builder, Gnaeus Octavius, who built it around 168 BCE.[13] Unfortunately, none of the texts that survive are explicit about the location of the portico mentioned by Augustus, but Festus clearly states that there was both a Porticus Octaviae and a Porticus Octavia, specifying that the one nearer the theatre of Marcellus was made by Octavia (Festus 188L: *theatro Marcelli propriorem Octavia soror Augusti fecit*).[14] This porticus was a complete restoration and reworking of the Porticus Metelli, which had originally been constructed probably around 146 BCE by Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus.[15]

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11 Coarelli 2007, 271–273. The temple of Juno Regina predates the Metellan build; it was dedicated in 179 by M. Aemilius Lepidus. Metellus added the temple of Jupiter Stator – the first in Rome built entirely of marble (Platner & Ashby 1929, *s.v. Porticus Octaviae*; Richardson 1992; and *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*).

12 Cass. Dio 55.8.2; Ov. *Fast.* 6.637–638.

13 Cass. Dio, 49.43.8: ἐπειδή τε οἱ Δελμάται παντελῶς ἐκεχείρωντο, τάς τε στοὰς ἀπὸ τῶν λαφύρων αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς ἀποθήκας τῶν βιβλίων τὰς Ὀκταουιανὰς ἐπὶ τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτοῦ κληθείσας κατεσκεύασεν ("And after the Dalmatians had been utterly subjugated, he erected from the spoils thus gained the porticos and the libraries called the Octavian, after his sister"). *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 19.1: *... porticum ... Octaviam*; Coarelli 2007, 267; Plin. *HN* 34.13.

14 Olinder 1974 argues that the *Porticus Octavia* was later restored by Q. Caecilius Metellus and incorporated into his portico. Evidence in support of this supposition is, however, lacking. See Senseney 2011, 422–426, for a useful discussion of these two public porticoes.

15 Both the Porticus Octavia and the Porticus Metelli are mentioned by Vell. Pat. 2.1.2 as early instances of public extravagance being introduced to Rome. Both grand, the Porticus

It was decorated, both before and after its Augustan restoration, with famous works of art, many of them put in place by Metellus – including the Granicus Monument, a group of life-sized bronze equestrian statues originally commissioned by Alexander the Great.[16] As such, it stood as a monument to Metellus and his military successes. This, as much as its age, arguably made it a candidate for later Augustan restructuring, as turning personal monuments into public ones was a practice developed by the early imperial household.

Ovid mentions this portico in the *Ars Amatoria* in his discussion of the best places to meet women. He notes that it was Marcellus, Octavia's son and Augustus' son-in-law and heir apparent, who began work on the portico but died before its completion.[17] This is plausible and fits with the chronology so far as it can be discerned; Dio has Marcellus and Augustus' stepson, Tiberius, arranging military exhibitions as aediles in 25 BCE, and Marcellus elected aedile in 24, the same year the Senate awarded him several extraordinary honours.[18] It is possible that Marcellus began a restoration of the Porticus Metelli that was left unfinished when he died midway through 23 BCE.[19] As the mother of the dead heir-presumptive, it makes sense that Octavia would have taken up the project and been responsible for completing the construction of her son's portico. Her additions included a *schola* or *curia* (where the Senate met on at least two occasions) mentioned by Pliny, as well as a library with Greek and Latin collections, which Plutarch says Octavia dedicated to her son.[20] Lastly, there is the evidence of the Severan marble plan, the *Forma Urbis Romae*, where the Porticus Octaviae appears on four fragments, one of which is labelled [PORTI]CUS OCTAVIAE ET FIL[I].[21] Based on the location of this portico relative to the Theatre of Marcellus, which was begun by Julius

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Octavia was, he says, the most beautiful of all. For the Porticus of Octavia, see *LTUR*, *s.v. Porticus Octaviae*; Vell. Pat. 1.11.3; also, Boyd 1953 for detailed discussion.

16 Vell. Pat. 1.11.3; Plin. *HN* 34.64.

17 Ov. *Ars. am.* 1.69–70. Ovid's phrase, *mater addidit* implies that Octavia added to or increased the structure, aside from merely completing it.

18 Cass. Dio 53.26.1 (25 BCE, Tiberius and Marcellus are aediles); 53.28.3–4.

19 Richardson 1976, 63.

20 *Schola*: Plin. *HN*. 35.114, 36.22; *curia*: Plin. *HN*. 36.28; meetings: Cass. Dio 55.8.1 and Joseph. *BJ* 7.5.4; libraries: Suet. *Gram. et rhet.* 21 (librarian identified); Plut. *Marc.* 30.6.

21 I am following Richardson 1976, 63, in his restoration of this inscription. Richardson argues that it must refer to Octavia's son, Marcellus, because Augustus renamed the nearby theatre, begun by Julius Caesar, for Marcellus and because the library and *curia* inside the Porticus Octaviae also bore his name. This may accord with Ovid's assertion (*Ars am.* 1.69–70) that Marcellus began work on this building and Octavia completed it, with additions, after his death. Others, however, argue that FIL[IPPI] must be the correct reading as it fills the appropriate space and because the Porticus Filippi was very nearby. See Almeida 1981; Richardson 1976, 27. The fragments in question are plates 21 and 28 in

Caesar and completed and dedicated by Augustus to his dead nephew, the Porticus Octaviae was clearly part of a building campaign that wrote the imperial family into a portion of the city populated with commemorative builds.[22] Indeed, this structure is interesting in the way that its Augustan manifestation combines a public and political meeting place with a Julian family shrine.[23] Restored at least twice in its history – after a devastating fire in 80 CE and again in 203 CE – it was apparently considered important enough to warrant repeated preservation and improvement, likely because of its ideological associations.[24] An inscription bearing the names of Septimius Severus and Caracalla attests that they carried out the restoration of 203.[25] Archaeological investigations undertaken in the 1990s reveal that the Severan restoration was extensive but, intriguingly, this is not reflected on the marble plan, which shows the earlier version of the complex instead.[26]

Seeing the Porticus Octaviae as the result of Augustus' decision to allow his sister to invest in the completion of her son's project makes sense of Pliny's repeated references to the portico as *Octaviae opera* – the works of Octavia.[27] Octavia, in seeing her son's project through to completion, publicly displayed both her substantial financial resources and her capacity for personal agency; she also joined in her brother's refurbishment of the city as we know his wife, Livia, did as well.[28] Indeed, it makes sense that Augustus would use his Dalmatian spoils to restore the Porticus Octavia, thus returning to the people a place which just happened to bear his former name and which had singularly martial implications, while allowing his sister to complete the project begun

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Lanciani 1990, and 31vaa, 31bb, 31cc, 31ii on Stanford University's *FUR* project online at: http://formaurbis.stanford.edu.

22 See Woodhull 2003, 22–23 and Favro 1996, 171–175 for discussion.

23 See Gorrie 2007, for discussion of the imposition on the northern side of the Circus Flaminius of a decidedly Julian theme and the exploitation of this theme by the Severans.

24 Dio enumerates the major structures damaged by the fire of 80 at 66.24.2. The portico was likely restored by Domitian on this occasion.

25 *CIL* VI.1034.

26 Rossetto 1996, 267; Lusnia 2014, 97.

27 See Plin. *HN* 34.31, 35.139, and 36.15 for items referred to as *in Octaviae operibus*. The connection between Octavia and the portico is strengthened by the existence of several tombs belonging to individuals who worked in the portico's library, which were found in the household columbarium of Octavia's daughter, Marcella: *CIL* 6.4431–4433, 4435, 4461; Boyd 1953, 157.

28 Epigraphic and textual evidence attests to Livia's activity as public benefactor of sites connected to Rome's *matronae*. See *CIL* VI.883 (the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris) and Ov., *Fast*, 5.147–158 (Temple of Bona Dea Subsaxana). See below (n. 64) for discussion.

by her son, with its mix of religious and artistic/cultural implications.[29] Doing this would have cemented the Julian family's presence in the area of the Circus Flaminius while simultaneously circumventing charges of an overtly political building agenda.

The Porticus Liviae was different both in context and message. No visible remains of this portico survive.[30] Indeed, its location in the city was not known until the discovery of the Severan marble plan, which features several fragments marked with its name.[31] Judging by this map, the portico appears to have been situated on the Oppian spur of the Esquiline Hill and allowed access by a double staircase down to the ancient Clivus Suburanus – although its precise location remains uncertain.[32] Both Ovid, in his *Fasti*, and Dio recount how it was built on the site of the home of the notorious Vedius Pollio, which was destroyed by a decree of the *princeps*.[33] Perhaps as a result of its location, this structure was a public space of some note. Strabo numbers it among the wonders of Rome and says that both this and the Porticus Octaviae were among those structures built by Augustus' family members.[34] Pliny the Younger mentions meeting a friend "under the shade of Livia's portico," while his uncle, the Elder Pliny, wrote about the extraordinary grapevine that wound its way all along the portico, providing each year not only shade but hundreds of litres of wine.[35] It also appears, as we have noted, among Ovid's list of places to meet women: "Nor should you avoid the Livian colonnade," he says, "which, scattered o'er with ancient paintings, keeps its founder's name" (Ov. *Ars am.* 1.71–72: *Nec tibi vitetur quae, priscis sparsa tabellis, Porticus auctoris Livia nomen habet*).[36] Dio mentions this impressive structure twice: At 54.23.1–6, he recalls the death of Vedius Pollio and Pollio's bequest to Augustus of two properties – a

29 Cooley 2009, 187, suggests that Augustus' family may have harbored hopes of implying relationship to a more prominent line of the Octavii.

30 Panella 1987, 611–612.

31 Carettoni, Colini, Cozza, & Gatti 1960, nos. 10l, 10p, 10q, 10r, and 11a. See also the Stanford Digital *Forma Urbis Romae* Project site.

32 Panella 1987, 613, places the northern gate of the portico as corresponding roughly to the 17th century entrance of the ancient church of Santa Lucia in Selci.

33 Ov. *Fast.* 6.637–648; Cass. Dio 54.23.5–6. P. Vedius Pollio was an equestrian partisan of Augustus who may have been made responsible for Asia following Actium. See Syme 1961, 28–29. Noted for his avarice and *luxuria*, Pollio is best remembered for his man-eating *muraenae* as related in Cass. Dio 54.23.2–3; Sen. *Clem.* 1.18.2 and *Dial.* 3.40.2; Plin. *HN* 9.77 (where Pollio is described as *ex amicis divi Augusti*); Tert. *De pallio*, 5.6.

34 Strabo 5.3.8.

35 Plin. *HN* 14.11.

36 Texts and translations of Ovid are taken from Mozley's edition (Loeb Classical Library, 1929).

seaside home called 'Pausilypon' near Naples and an opulent urban villa at Rome. Augustus, Dio says, had the Roman villa torn down in order to make a statement against overt shows of luxury. In terms of timing, it seems that while demolition of the urban villa may have been carried out soon after Augustus received the bequest, the construction of the Porticus Liviae did not begin until some later date.[37] In January of 7 BCE, Dio tells us, Tiberius and Livia together dedicated the "precinct of Livia" (τὸ τεμένισμα τὸ Λίουιον ὠνομασμένον),[38] which we might identify as this very portico with its altar to Concordia.[39] It is distinctly possible that Tiberius (standing in for Augustus) and Livia dedicated the sacred complex together in January as Dio describes, and that later that year, on June 11, the festival of the *Matralia*, Livia made a special solo dedication of the *aedes Concordiae* within the enclosure to her husband as Ovid relates.[40] The Porticus Liviae offered not only respite from urban woes but also clearly emphasized the importance of the imperial family and the harmony of Livia and Augustus.

Given that Dio simply reports, against most other evidence for these structures, that Augustus alone should receive credit for them, it makes sense to compare Dio's claim against our other texts. One work in which we might place hope, Augustus' autobiography, unfortunately, survives only as fragments in later authors.[41] What is clear, though, is that this work would have been only partially useful, as Suetonius relates that it consisted of thirteen books that went only as far as the Cantabrian Wars; it cannot, therefore, have treated the Porticus Liviae.[42] Another vital source is the *Res Gestae*, but, intriguingly, Augustus does not mention *either* structure here, despite providing,

37 Cass. Dio 54.23.6–7.

38 Cass. Dio 55.8.1–3. Tiberius, who had just celebrated a triumph, was standing in for Augustus, who was still away on campaign.

39 While τεμένισμα may refer only to the shrine that Ov. *Fast.* 6.637 clearly says Livia built and dedicated to Augustus, a *TLG* search of Dio's text shows that he only used this word when referring to sacred enclosures, which the *Porticus Liviae* would have been with the addition of the shrine or altar (see Cass. Dio 42.26.2; 44.22; 52.35.5; 53.1.3; 53.27.1; 55.8.1–3; 57.9.1; 59.28.1; 65.6.1; 79[78].24.3). This strongly suggests that we ought to think of the entire portico as the gift to Augustus, not just the *aedes* to Concordia. The other possibility, of course, is that Livia had a shrine to Concordia built somewhere else in the city, though by telling the story of Pollio's house and its demolition by Augustus both Dio and Ovid clearly connect shrine and portico.

40 For discussion, see Flory 1984, 311f. The fact that Livia and Tiberius together dedicated the Porticus Liviae in 7 BCE is likely what led Zanker to conclude that they were responsible for its construction as well (Zanker 1988, 137).

41 See Smith and Powell 2008, 1–13 for identified fragments and references.

42 Suet. *Aug*. 85.1. The Cantabrian Wars (29–19 BCE) were those fought against the Iberian Cantabri and Astures.

in paragraphs 19–21, a lengthy catalogue of the buildings he restored or constructed. We might assume that Dio relied on another source or sources now unidentifiable or that Augustus decided for some reason to leave these structures out of the *Res Gestae*, but given the evidence, it appears prudent to examine Dio's narrative and the context within which his claims appear.

This takes us to Suetonius, the author whom, as we have seen, Dio appears to corroborate. In chapter 29 of his *Life of the Divine Augustus*, Suetonius writes:

> *Quaedam etiam opera sub nomine alieno, nepotum scilicet et uxoris sororisque fecit, ut porticum basilicamque Gai et Luci, item porticus Liviae et Octaviae theatrumque Marcelli.*
>
> He constructed some works too in the name of others, his grandsons and nephew to wit, his wife and his sister, such as the colonnade and basilica of Gaius and Lucius; also, the colonnades of Livia and Octavia, and the theatre of Marcellus.[43]

While it is not entirely outside the realm of possibility that Augustus would name a structure for his wife or his sister, it seems unlikely that he would then fail to take credit for two such major works in the *Res Gestae*, given that he took the time to enumerate so many structures, including the ones he executed in the name of his family members.[44] So far as we can tell from the *Res Gestae*, Augustus had a clearly programmatic approach to building – he either built personal monuments (his forum, sundial, and mausoleum), restored existing structures and allowed them to retain their original names (the Theatre of Pompey and Porticus Octavia), or commemorated his dead relatives with public buildings (the Basilica of Gaius and Lucius, the Theatre of Marcellus). If we follow Suetonius and Dio in assigning the porticoes of Livia and Octavia to Augustus, that would make them the only two recorded instances in which Augustus built to honour another living person. An extraordinary honour to be sure, and, as far as we can tell, one without clear precedent.

Then there is the evidence of Ovid's *Fasti* where, as in Dio, the author explicitly connects Augustus' exemplarity, the tearing down of Pollio's urban villa, and the construction of the Porticus Liviae. Ovid, though, does not claim the

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43 Suet. *Aug*. 29.4. This is a beguiling reversal of Strabo's assertion in *Geog.* 5.3.8, and it is interesting that even though Strabo lived during Augustus' reign and could arguably be considered the more reliable authority, Suetonius is generally given more weight. Texts and translations of Suetonius are taken from Rolfe's edition (Loeb Classical Library, 1914).

44 *RGDA* 20.3, 21.1 (Cooley 2005).

construction of the portico for Augustus. Rather, he divides the praise equally between Augustus and Livia:

> *Te quoque magnifica, Concordia, dedicat aede*
> *Livia, quam caro praestitit ipsa viro.*
> *disce tamen, veniens aetas: ubi Livia nunc est*
> *porticus, immensae tecta fuere domus;*
> *urbis opus domus una fuit spatiumque tenebat*
> *quo brevius muris oppida multa tenent.*
> *haec aequata solo est, nullo sub crimine regni,*
> *sed quia luxuria visa nocere sua.*
> *sustinuit tantas operum subvertere moles*
> *totque suas heres perdere Caesar opes:*
> *sic agitur censura et sic exempla parantur,*
> *cum vindex, alios quod monet, ipse facit.*
>
> To you too, Concordia, Livia dedicated a magnificent temple, which she offered to her dear husband. Nevertheless, listen, coming age: Where the portico of Livia now is once stood an enormous home, it was like the work of a city and occupied a space larger than that of many towns. It was levelled to the ground, not on account of any criminal charge, but because its luxury was considered harmful. Caesar took upon himself to overturn such a vast work and to destroy so much wealth to which he himself was the heir: This is how to act as censor and this is how to set an example when the claimant does himself what he advises others to do.[45]

On the surface, this passage seems to corroborate Dio and Suetonius' attribution of the Porticus Liviae to Augustus, but a closer look calls this into question. In the *Fasti*, Augustus destroyed (*subvertere*) Pollio's home; Livia dedicates (*dedicat*) a shrine to Concordia on that spot. Ovid says no more than that. Ovid's Augustus is praised for tearing down, not building; personal luxury is destroyed, which is what makes Augustus an *exemplum*. Private extravagance is destroyed to make room for Livia's shrine, and this is clearly the intended parallel: The emperor's moral sense checks luxury and allows the construction of a remarkable new public area in the heart of the city. This text does not actually speak to who constructed the porticus, though Roman tradition would dictate that the building bears its patron's name.

45 Ov. *Fast.* 6.637–648 (author's translation).

But the question remains: Why would Dio say that the Porticus Octaviae and Porticus Liviae were built by Augustus? Since Dio and Suetonius are the only authors to identify Augustus as their builder, at this point we are presented with two possibilities: Either Dio was following Suetonius, or they were both following a common annalistic source, now lost.[46] The first instance was entertained by Fergus Millar, who outlined what he saw as hints peppered throughout Dio's work which might indicate Dio's debt to this earlier biographer. Dio's explanations for the title "Augustus" and for Augustus' choice of the month to be named for him are, for example, identical to Suetonius', as is Dio's report of a supposed portent of Augustus' death, which is a direct translation of the anecdote as recorded by Suetonius.[47] The possibility that the two authors shared the same annalistic source, meanwhile, presents the problem that we cannot know what information they gleaned from this source.[48] Dio's report of the construction of the Porticus Liviae is placed within the narrative of 15 BCE, the year of Pollio's death, because it provides a tidy ending to anecdotes concerning the dead man's character. Indeed, this episode stands as an example of the way Dio wove his larger themes into his annalistic reporting of events in Rome.[49] Dio may have used an annalistic source in opening the year 15 with Pollio's death, but if so, he disregarded chronology in order to suit his ideological purpose. A supposed shared source, therefore, hardly changes our approach to the problem as in either case both Dio and Suetonius used building in the city to signal Augustus' concern for rebuilding the state. If we look closer at the chapters in Suetonius' *Life of the Divine Augustus* in which he addresses the Augustan settlement and compare these to Dio's approach to Augustus' reign, we see a shared assertion that Augustus was the unsurpassed

46 Concerning the question of Augustus' autobiography with regards to these porticos, see n. 41 above.

47 For these and others, see Millar 1964, 86–87; 86 n.4 provides the following incidents of additional "minor" correspondences: Cass. Dio 51.3.6–7 and Suet., *Aug*. 50; Cass. Dio 51.14.3–4 and Suet., *Aug*. 17.8; Cass Dio. 53.22.3 and Suet., *Aug*. 52; Cass. Dio 54.4.3 and Suet., *Aug*. 91.3; Cass. Dio 54.11.7 and Suet., *Aug*. 42.1; Cass. Dio 55.3.1 and Suet., *Aug*. 35.4; Cass. Dio 55.10.7 and Suet., *Aug*. 43.2; Cass. Dio 55.10.16 and Suet., *Aug*. 65.5. Cf. Swan 1987, 272–291 and Rich 1990, 92.

48 There is an issue in that a supposed annalistic source may have ascribed the erection of these public places to Augustus as a form, not because he actually funded them. This remains unknowable. Suet. *Aug.* 29 and Strabo 5.8.3 inform us that Augustus was joined by others in funding public buildings in Rome. We might rightly assume, therefore, that Octavia, for example, received an invitation (or at least permission) from her brother to fund the completion of her son's work on the *Porticus Metelli*. That credit for her project was later granted to her brother as head of the household is always a possibility.

49 Swan 1987, 274–276.

restructurer and restorer of Rome, both literally and figuratively. One possible avenue to better understanding Dio's narrative may be available, therefore, if we take a closer look at how they each employed the theme of building as a metaphor for statecraft.

3 *Suetonius'* Life of the Divine Augustus

Roman writers – biographers as well as historians – were, we know, not necessarily motivated to write precisely what happened but strove instead to convey information that might encapsulate the essence of the person or event on which they were focused.[50] We ought, therefore, to keep in mind Suetonius' potential motivations for ascribing the building of the Porticus Octaviae and the Porticus Liviae to Augustus and be aware that Suetonius' claims may not be unproblematic.

Suetonius, at chapter 29 of the *Life of the Divine Augustus*, portrays Augustus as the great rebuilder of Roman society following the lengthy civil war, an image expressed in part by Augustus' attention to the physical appearance of the city. Both Suetonius and Dio state that Augustus was the man who found Rome a city of brick and left it one of marble, though they ascribe this statement to differing circumstances. Suetonius places the statement in chapter 28 as a boast that follows immediately on a consideration of Augustus' restructuring of the state.[51] If we look at the chapters preceding 28, though, what Suetonius is doing becomes clearer. In chapter 27, Suetonius reprises Augustus' political career, concentrating on his years in the triumvirate and his eventual triumph over his enemies and former colleagues. In chapter 28, Suetonius relates Augustus' reasons for not restoring the Republic, quoting from an edict purportedly published by Augustus on the topic of the restoration of the state:

> *Ita mihi salvam ac sospitem rem p. sistere in sua sede liceat atque eius rei fructum percipere, quem peto, ut optimi status auctor dicar et moriens ut feram mecum spem, mansura in vestigio suo fundamenta rei p. quae iecero.*
>
> May I be privileged to establish the State in a firm and secure position and reap from that act the fruit that I desire; but only if I may be called

50 Wallace-Hadrill 1995, 9–19 offers an overview of Suetonius' approach and method; see also Marincola 2009, 18–19; on ancient historians' use of rhetoric in constructing their texts, see Laird 2009.

51 Cass. Dio 56.30.4 has Augustus making his famous claim while on his deathbed.

> the author of the best possible government, and bear with me the hope that when I die the foundations which I have laid for the State will remain unshaken.[52]

In chapter 29, then, Suetonius deliberately links the idea of firm political foundations through a revised Augustan constitution to a related topic, the restructuring of the city's built environment to align it more completely with the conceptualized ideal capital. Here, Augustus' building in the city is held up as a concrete expression of his political and personal aspirations. By building, the *princeps* demonstrates his *pietas* to the gods and his father and establishes himself as patron of the city and its people, weaving himself into the fabric of the city as thoroughly as he wove himself into its political structures through his various powers and offices. Suetonius' list of the public buildings that Augustus undertook on behalf of his relatives, then, fleshes out his portrait of Augustus as the great restructurer and establishes him as one of Suetonius' "good emperors" who built for the benefit of the public (unlike Nero, for example, whose construction work was evidence of an unmanly obsession with personal luxury).[53] We should consider, then, the possibility that Suetonius wanted to attribute as many public acts of building as possible to the first emperor, especially if the list could include two such well-known and ideologically charged structures.

4 Cassius Dio

When we compare this approach to that of Cassius Dio, we see distinct echoes of Suetonius' sentiment in Dio's text: (Cass. Dio 56.30.4):

> "τὴν Ῥώμην γηίνην παραλαβὼν λιθίνην ὑμῖν καταλείπω." τοῦτο μὲν οὖν οὐ πρὸς τὸ τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων αὐτῆς ἀκριβὲς ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἰσχυρὸν ἐνεδείξατο

> "I found Rome of clay; I leave it to you of marble." He did not thereby refer literally to the appearance of its buildings, but rather to the strength of the empire.

52 Suet. *Aug*. 28.

53 Suet. *Ner.* 30–31; Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 168–169. See also Kuhn in this volume.

Here, Dio, like Suetonius, establishes a parallel between the firm foundations of the state and the physical rebuilding of the capital, albeit in a different context and more compactly, encapsulating the sentiment in a single observation. It almost reads like a paraphrase of Suetonius, as Dio appears likewise motivated to present Augustus as an *exemplum*. If we connect this to the chapter where Dio recounts the genesis of the Porticus Liviae, we can see that his focus is the same – to depict Augustus' actions as those of an ideal *princeps*. Dio relates the death of Pollio as one of the events of 15 BCE as a pretext for contrasting Augustus' *clementia* with Pollio's cruelty in the story about the slave who without Augustus' intervention would have been fed to Pollio's lampreys.[54] Thus Augustus is positioned as a foil to Pollio's *luxuria* in temperament as well as lifestyle. Dio then moves to Pollio's will and the moral example Augustus offers by not only ignoring the self-aggrandizing terms of Pollio's bequest but also thwarting it by destroying the luxurious house "with the purpose that Pollio should have no monument in the city."[55] Dio completes his portrait by having Augustus build the massive portico and inscribe on it the name of Livia *instead* of Pollio's (or even his own, a laudatory choice). Dio's Augustus thus completely rejects the luxury and cruelty that Pollio embodies by overwriting Pollio's presence in the cityscape.

The construction of the portico, then, is an interesting observation, but not actually necessary to establish the point about Pollio's luxury. Why not simply leave it out entirely? Very likely Dio was conversant enough with the *Res Gestae* to know that Augustus himself made no mention of the Porticus Liviae.[56] How, then, to explain its inclusion in Dio's history? Several possibilities suggest themselves, none of which necessarily excludes the others.

The first and most obvious explanation is that Dio's Augustan narrative required not only the destruction of a private monument to personal luxury but the addition of an accompanying act of restoration. The parallelism between the two stories – Pollio's bequest and the construction of the portico – centers on Vedius Pollio, who is represented as the opposite of Augustus both in terms of temperament (anger versus compassion) as well as in terms of attitude towards building in the city (private luxury versus public munificence). Seeing that Dio is using building in the city as an expression of a ruler's nature and intent, the narrative parallelism would have been lacking without Augustus' construction of the Porticus Liviae to prove his complete rejection of all that Pollio and his villa represented. Dio's concern to show Augustus as the restorer

54 Cass. Dio 54.23.2–5.

55 Cass. Dio 54.23.6.

56 Dio references the *Res Gestae* at 56.33.1; Swan 2004, 315–316.

of political and societal balance demanded that he attribute such a symbolically charged public structure to the *princeps*.

This raises a connected but less obvious issue, namely that for members of the senatorial elite like Dio, who wrestled with the degradations suffered by the Senate under a succession of emperors from Commodus on, there was a certain tension arising from the concentration of power in the imperial family, and particularly the activity of imperial women as seen by their public displays of wealth and power.[57] Given Dio's apparent interest in using his *Roman History* to comment on the contemporary political situation, one possible explanation for the attribution of the Porticus Liviae especially to Augustus resides, ultimately, in his own experiences of the imperial court.[58] After all, Dio's observations of the active role of the Severan women must have coloured how he interpreted and presented earlier imperial women and influenced which details pertaining to them he included or left out – and which ones he changed or allowed to stand.[59] Indeed, Dio's depiction of the relationship of the emperor's wife (or closest female relatives) to the public sphere reveals his appreciation of imperial women who eschewed public prominence and his disapproval of those who did not. His endorsement, for example, of Plotina, Trajan's wife, or of Vitellius' mother, stands in contrast to his condemnatory portraits of women like Messalina or the Younger Agrippina, each of whom is depicted as relentlessly power-hungry.[60] This preference for women who remained benignly in the background may help explain Dio's apparent reticence to allow that the Porticus Liviae and Porticus Octaviae were funded by Livia and Octavia. Building in public was simply too suggestive of the emperor's power and authority.

Indeed, building bespoke wealth and personal agency no matter who undertook it. Epigraphic evidence indicates that women of wealth and standing had

57 See Swan 2004, 6 for a brief discussion. See Langford 2013, 87–93 on the nature of the relationship between imperial women and the Senate under the Severans.

58 Dio's narrative as commentary on contemporary politics: Swan 2004, 13–26; Reinhold 1988, 5–6, 9–11, 12–15; Langford 2013, 108–111; Mastrorosa 2019, 219–221.

59 Barrett 2002, 155, 238 suggests that Dio's perspective on Livia's supposed political aspirations was skewed by his observations of Julia Domna in her position as *ab epistulis* under Caracalla. Cf. Bertolazzi 2015, 421–424. Against the view that Domna exercised real power, see Levick 2007, 95–98.

60 Vitellius' mother at Cass. Dio 62.6.5 is "… a good, honest soul …" who rejected her son's pretensions; is also a foil to his wife, Galeria. Dio's portrait of Plotina, however, is admittedly mixed. On the one hand he comments (68.5.5) of her that she "conducted herself during the entire reign in such manner as to incur no censure," while on the other, at 69.1 he has her manipulating the succession by delaying news of Trajan's death until Hadrian's position was secure.

been active in Rome as builders during the Republican era and that imperial women continued the tradition.[61] The acceptability of women as builders, though, must have changed with the regime and the circumstances under which each imperial family operated. In every case, it must have come down to the decision of the emperor. As early as 35 BCE Augustus' *auctoritas* had been sufficient to allow him to convince the Senate that his wife and sister should be granted the *sacrosanctitas* of the tribunes of the plebs, freedom from tutelage, and the privilege of having public statues and images of them set up in public places.[62] This is one of the factors that makes it possible to believe that Octavia used her personal wealth to take up the building project begun by her son. She enhanced the whole complex and swathed it in marble; as a result, it bore her name. Livia was also given free rein to act publicly as Rome's first woman – including building a portico and a shrine to Concordia that she dedicated to her husband and restoring other structures important to Rome's elite matrons. But building was such a potent expression of wealth and public standing that Julia Domna's activity as the restorer of public monuments was much curtailed compared to Livia's. We might pause to consider that this is how Dio thought it should be. Looking back, Dio could see that the Augustan period served up images of an empress granted extraordinary powers. That Livia and Octavia were allowed to build in the city may have seemed an inappropriate expression of these powers to Dio, who is unlikely to have been ignorant of Livia and Octavia's public participation as builders. Livia's restoration of the Temple of Bona Dea Subsaxana was noted by Ovid, who framed her public action as proof of her commitment to Augustus' restoration of the city: "Livia restored it, that she might imitate her husband and follow him in everything" (Ov. *Fast.* 5.157–158: *Livia restituit, ne non imitata maritum esset et ex omni parte secuta suum*).[63] Literary mentions, if there were any, of Livia's renewal of the temple of Fortuna Muliebris, at the fourth milestone outside the city, do not survive. The remains of a marble architrave found outside Rome on the ancient Via Latina, however, recall her patronage of this temple as well. Another inscription on the same marble fragments declares that it was later restored again, not by Julia Domna acting alone as Livia had, but by the Severans as a family:

61 See especially Hemelrijk 2015; Cooley 2013, 23–46; Basso 2015, 353–371.

62 Cass. Dio 48.39.1. Purcell 1986 is an important starting point for assessing the Livia's import. On public statues for women see Flory 1993, Hemelrijk 2005, Boatwright 2011.

63 Ovid does not here comment on the implications of her apparent public agency. The text and translation of Ovid's *Fasti* is taken from Frazer's edition (Loeb Classical Library 1931).

Livia [*D*]*rusi f*(*ilia*) *uxs*[*or Caesaris Augusti …*]
Impp(*eratores*) *C*[*aes*](*are*)*s Severus et* [*Antoninus Augg*(*usti*) *et Geta nobilissimus Caes*(*ar*)]
et [*Iulia*] *Aug*(*usta*) *mater* [*Augg*(*ustorum*)*… restituerunt*][64]

Livia, daughter of Drusus, wife of Caesar Augustus [restored this temple?]
Imperatores Caesares Severus and Antoninus *Augusti* and most noble Caesar Geta
and Julia Augusta, mother of the *Augusti*, [restored this].

In contrast, the only surviving instance of Julia Domna's name standing alone on what appears to be a building dedication is mysterious because the structure, if it was a structure, in question is unknown:

Julia Aug(*usta*) *Mater Augg*(*usti*) *et castrorum*
matronis restituit
Sabina Aug(*usta*)
matronis.[65]

Julia Augusta, mother of the Augusti and of the camps,
Restored this for the matrons
Sabina Augusta,
for the matrons

This inscription was discovered in Trajan's Forum and is really a double dedication. The original is clearly a dedication by the empress Sabina, wife of Hadrian, to the matrons of Rome; the second is that of Julia Domna to the same body. Domna appears to have restored something that had originally been Sabina's gift to the city's matrons. Given the brevity and unknown provenance of this inscription, it would be easy to overlook its significance. It may have belonged to a building associated with the so-called *conventus matronarum*, the meeting place of the *ordo matronarum* mentioned in the *Historia Augusta*.[66] The

64 *CIL* VI.883. This temple, originally dedicated in 487 BCE, was restricted to women who had been married only once (*univira*). Plut. *Comp. Alc. Cor.* 37; Livy 2.40.12; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.17–56; Val. Max. 1.84; 5.2.

65 *CIL* VI.997 = *ILS* 324.

66 *HA Hel.* 4.3–4. For the *ordo matronarum*, see Hemelrijk 2015, 214 n. 115. Mommsen, *CIL* VI.997 suggests that because the inscription was found in Trajan's Forum at the foot of the Quirinal Hill, which was partially removed to make room for the new forum, the inscription may have belonged to the meeting place of Rome's matrons, which was located on that hill. Langford 2013, 72 suggests that the inscription may also have come from a statue.

significance of the inscription, though, is more directly related to the connection between the empress and the matrons of Rome, who are here addressed as a group.[67]

In terms of building, then, the timbre of each woman's public participation was clearly different, with Livia's public building projects providing a sort of parallel to her husband's, while Domna's public patronage is almost exclusively contained within the context of the family. Both women restored structures associated with the matrons of Rome as a group, and each also undertook the role of leading matron at important religious festivals (most notably, the *Ludi Saeculares*), but Livia appears in the surviving evidence as possessing more personal agency than Domna.[68] Indeed, the fact that the Severans seem especially observant of traditional sensibilities and limited Domna's public building projects should not be surprising. Severus clearly wanted to position himself as the new Augustus by underlining traditional Roman morality and restoring certain symbolically important structures, but in doing this he had to be mindful of attitudes towards his right to imperial authority and towards his household. This may help explain Severus' preference to highlight the involvement of the entire family on inscriptions of restored public buildings – even on structures that had earlier been projects of the empress acting alone, such as the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris. Doing so emphasized both his authority and the closeness of the imperial family. As a matter of policy, they would act together in public.

As Alain Gowing pointed out in a recent article on Dio and the city of Rome, Dio's attention to buildings in the city reflected his interest in how they stood for the nature of imperial power.[69] The Severan restriction on Julia Domna's participation in Severus' public building program likely seemed proper to Dio, something that he and his peers could take for granted as appropriate. At the same time, however, his experience of imperial politics taught him that it was

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This may not be entirely convincing or nearly as satisfying an explanation, but it cannot be ruled out. The argument for this having been a building dedication is, I believe, strengthened by the fact that Hadrian, like Augustus before him and Severus later, styled himself "restorer of the city". It is therefore plausible that Sabina, as first lady, was expected to participate in some way.

67 Evidence from her coinage suggests that Julia Domna may have also undertaken the restoration of the Temple of Vesta and House of the Vestals in the Forum, though it is not conclusive. For discussion, see Gorrie 2004, 65–68; Levick 2007, 67; Langford 2013, 164 n. 90; Lusnia 2014.

68 Cass. Dio 55.8.3: After the dedication of the Precinct of Livia, Tiberius hosted a banquet on the Capitol for the senators while Livia hosted a banquet for the women elsewhere. Women, led by the empress, were also important participants in the *ludi saeculares*; for the Augustan *ludi* of 17 BCE, see *CIL* 6.32323 = *ILS* 5050 = *AE* 2002; for the Severan *ludi*, see *CIL* 6.32326.

69 Gowing 2016, 118–119.

what happened behind the scenes that mattered. To return to an earlier point, then, if building represented, in the Roman mind, access to wealth and agency in a way that bespoke power, and if during Dio's lifetime his experience taught him that dynastic politics allowed women too-ready access to influence over the emperor, we might consider the possibility that Dio's omissions may not have been accidental, but rather elisions of female public activity so that his Augustus stood as an *exemplum* of an ideal ruler, and not as a man who allowed his wife or sister undue access to power, public or private. Honours such as those granted to Livia and Octavia (and imperial women after them) were arguably acceptable in order to reflect the glory of the emperor, but building in the city was to lay claim to public, political space. In this reading, Dio makes no mention at all of Octavia's work to complete the restoration project of her son because the prominence and access to influence that the restoration of the Porticus Metelli implied were too great. Likewise, Dio's failures to report Livia's restoration of the temples of Fortuna Muliebris and Bona Dea Subsaxana, or to credit her with the Porticus Liviae come into sharper focus if the empress' position as the first matron is considered, in hindsight, overly laden with implications of public power. As Millar pointed out in his 1964 *Study of Cassius Dio*, it was proximity to the emperor and influence on him that defined power in Dio's world.[70] And, as we know, the women closest to the emperor possessed both access and influence; what mattered was whether and to what extent they took advantage of this access. Livia and Octavia had been granted public honours in 35 BCE. Later, in 9 BCE, Livia also received the rights of mothers with three children and was given a seat with the Vestal Virgins in the Circus.[71] To these privileges we should add agency in the public sphere because there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the imperial consort, especially, had a public role as Rome's chief matron. Such a position was not an invention of the imperial period but a carryover from the Republic.[72]

The relationship of women to public power, however, was fraught with tensions. In the imperial context, public and private overlapped – what happened in private was understood to have potential public consequences and the extent to which a woman possessed a public persona (that summation of a man's political successes) bespoke a private failure on her imperial husband's

70 Millar 1964, 24.

71 Cass. Dio 55.2.5.

72 App. *B Civ.* 4.32–34 reports one of the most famous instances of this assumed power of private influence when, in 42 BCE, the women of Rome consult first with the wives and mothers of the triumvirs in an attempt to have a new tax on their personal wealth repealed. Rebuffed by Fulvia, they seek redress directly from the triumvirs in the Forum.

part.[73] The exercise of these powers shifted depending on the times and the nature of the imperial family. In his depiction of Livia, for example, Dio remains carefully neutral concerning her influence during Augustus' lifetime. He has her giving Augustus valuable advice, entirely solicited, on clemency and casually reports some of her public appearances, each in an appropriate setting.[74] This changes once Augustus dies, however. Indeed, Dio reports the story that Livia had a hand in his demise and that she manipulated the succession in private.[75] This turn in the narrative may signal Dio's distaste for dynasty, which he saw as antithetical to the ideal of one-man rule.[76] Accordingly, in Dio's narrative of Tiberius' reign Livia is described as having more power than any woman before her – a claim that is undoubtedly true – but also as desiring to rule alongside her son, an implication arguably born of his experience under Caracalla, who allowed his mother, Julia Domna, to have access to official correspondence, as though she were *ab epistulis*, and of his knowledge of the private powers and influence of later Severan women. In Dio's history, dynasty invited the sort of private political machinations that he understood to be so damaging to his ideal of an emperor chosen and guided by experienced advisors from the Senate.

Lastly, Dio's omission of female public building activity must have also been related to his priorities as a historian. It may sound obvious, but Dio's history is not about women. Their activity or lack thereof stands, instead, as a means of establishing whether an emperor was the right sort of man. In the context within which he was writing, Dio's discomfort with female power, projected backwards, may have been behind his cautious reports of gossip about Livia's private influence – the suspicion that she had a hand in the death of Marcellus, for example – when he is discussing the reign of Augustus.[77] Once the almost-ideal of imperial power embodied in Augustus turned to dynasty, however, Dio intimates Livia's manipulation of the succession. Later, he will praise Tiberius for setting limits to her political ambitions.[78] There is surely a parallel to the

73 Adler 2011, 141 raises Dio's apparent implication that too much female influence was emasculating for an emperor. His example is 57.12.1–6: Livia's supposed attempts to take precedence over Tiberius following Augustus' death and the Senate's proposals concerning a change in title for Tiberius to include his mother's name.

74 Livia's advice to Augustus, 55.14–22; hostess of public banquet for the *matronae* following Tiberius' triumph, 55.2.4.

75 Cass. Dio 56.30.1 (suspicions that Livia poisoned Augustus) and 56.30.5 (Livia delays the announcement of Augustus' death until Tiberius can reach the city).

76 Swan 2004, 14–17; Madsen 2016, 138–139, for example.

77 Cass. Dio 53.33.4.

78 Swan 2004, 6.

passage, which appears at 57.12.2, in which Dio describes Livia as desiring an inappropriate degree of involvement in Rome's public life during Tiberius' reign ("she undertook to manage everything as if she were sole ruler" [τά γε ἄλλα πάντα ὡς καὶ αὐταρχοῦσα διοικεῖν ἐπεχείρει]), and 79[78].23.4, in which he chastises Julia Domna for wanting to hold onto the powers she had possessed under her son ("fearing she might be deprived of the title of Augusta and be forced to return to [her] native country" [... ειτο φοβηθεῖσα μὴ τοῦ τε ὀνόματος τοῦ τῆς Αὐγούστης στερηθῇ καὶ ἐς τα ... πατρίδα ἀπελθεῖν ἀναγκασθῇ ...]).[79]

In the case of the Porticus Octaviae and the Porticus Liviae, Dio chose to leave the public participation of Livia and Octavia out of his portrayal of Augustus in order, first, to make him plausibly the ideal ruler in the context of his own time. A woman offering advice when asked was not especially distasteful, but a woman having a public persona was offensive to Dio's third-century CE sensibilities, and even more so when that persona was premised on one of the fundamentals of the male public role, namely, the construction of public buildings. Indeed, including the emperor's consort in the public representation of the ruler, granting her special titles and, as Caracalla would do for Julia Domna, allowing her to participate in overseeing official correspondence meant not just failing in a man's duty to curtail female ambition but also implied an indulgence of that ambition. Such indulgence might be read as weakness on the part of the emperor involved and, even worse, in the imperial context, was exactly the stuff from which imperial rule ought to have been entirely immune.

Romans understood buildings as denoting power, and if buildings denote power, then we should see Dio's changing of the attribution of these buildings as part of his discourse on power, and particularly his thinking on women's possession and expression of public authority. In this case, Dio ignores or erases Livia's and Octavia's participation in the public sphere first of all because it does not fit with his vision of the ideal *princeps* – it is not consistent with Augustus the reformer – and second, because by doing so he can subtly comment on the apparent excesses of the family with which he was actually familiar – the Severans.

79 Cf. Bertolazzi 2015, 430–431, who argues against a direct comparison of Dio's treatment of Livia and Julia Domna. Dio's use of larger themes is at issue here, however, not whether the narratives match in exact particulars. Livia's and Domna's careers during the reigns of their sons evoke a theme of dynasty as inviting too much political interference from an emperor's female family members.

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CHAPTER 7

Dio and the Dowager Empresses, Part 2: Julia Domna, the Senate, and Succession

Julie Langford

Senatorial-imperial relations and discussions concerning the qualities of a good leader are common themes in the writings of Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, and Cassius Dio. Straddling either end of the long second century, these senatorial authors engaged in the discourse of ethical autocracy that was born in the death-throes of the Republic and stretched beyond Dio's lifetime. Noreña identified and described this discourse, finding its roots in Hellenistic authors and tracing its unique development in Roman political thought into the third century. In describing this discourse, Noreña surveyed senatorial authors as well as provincial elites, philosophers and sophists, historians, and biographers. He posited that authors employed the discourse as a strategy for persuading the emperor that ruling well was in his own best interests.[1] Because of the ubiquity of this discourse, emperors could not help but be influenced by it. Those emperors who ignored the discourse, however, did so at their peril since their legacy lay officially in the hands of the Senate and informally among a variety of imperial authors.[2]

Among the qualities that Noreña identified as characterizing an ethical autocrat, the most highly esteemed was justice, a ruler's commitment to right order that prioritizes the greater good over the lesser.[3] Our senatorial authors disagreed, however, with equestrians, provincial elites, and the emperors themselves on what precisely constituted the greater good. As Markov demonstrates in this volume, regardless of their social standing, authors equated justice and

1 Noreña 2009, 278–229.

2 Noreña 2009, 272, 278. He characterizes this discourse "by the near total convergence of political and ethical language, on the one hand, and by the development of a highly articulated vocabulary of virtue and vice for the judgment of emperors and other rulers, on the other" (268). Ando 2016, 9 notes that it was the duty of the Senate to legitimate new emperors by awarding titles and honours. It was also its right to decide on an emperor's legacy, whether deification or *damnatio memoriae*.

3 Noreña 2009, 273. Though they do not say so explicitly, each author would likely accept Socrates' definition of justice as the act of privileging the greater good over the lesser. Noreña notices but does not fully explore the implications of the authors' self-interested descriptions of the ideal emperor.

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the greater good with their own interests.[4] For our senatorial authors, justice demanded that the emperor acknowledge the primacy of the Senate as his advisor and co-ruler, as well as its privileged social and political status.[5]

Senatorial authors vilified emperors who prioritized the advice of third parties over that of their senatorial colleagues.[6] Such third parties included Praetorian prefects who, though mere equestrians, often worked more closely with the emperor than his senatorial advisors. So too did freedmen, eunuchs, and slaves, "individuals from outside the social and political hierarchy."[7] Particularly troublesome were imperial women, whose unfettered access to the emperor challenged the primacy of the Senate's position as advisor to the emperor, particularly when it came to imperial succession.[8] They were thus favorite targets of our senatorial authors who depicted them as self-interested, ambitious, and untrustworthy advisors. The mention of empresses offered their senatorial rivals a rhetorical advantage as well: a powerful or influential empress opened an emperor to attacks on his leadership as well as his masculinity, sometimes directly, sometimes by innuendo.

This article explores how Cassius Dio employed Julia Domna to judge Septimius Severus and Caracalla as both leaders and men. It is the second installment in a three-part examination of Dio's treatment of the dowager empresses Livia, Agrippina, and Julia Domna.[9] Though Dio seems to endow

4 In particular Markov explores how various authors define democracy as the participation of the members of their own order while happily excluding all others.

5 Several scholars have written on the senatorial-imperial relationship described in Dio's speech of Maecenas. The interpretations most pertinent to the exploration comprise Kemezis 2014, 133–145, who reads the speech not as describing the system under which Dio lived or even the normative or ideal, but as "guiding principles and parameters" whereby the best people (i.e., the Senate) have a role in guiding the government. However, Ando 2016, 569 asserts that the speech of Maecenas was normative, a "self-contained and self-legitimating system" in which the emperor allowed the Senate to appear as if it were in control even as it ceded to him all power. Madsen (in this volume) sees the speech as influenced by contemporary relationships between the Severan emperors and the Senate, with all power and responsibility for policy decisions lying with the ruler. He also notes Maecenas' advice to consult with the Senate and his council (which were to consist of senators) in major decisions (52.15.1–2, 52.19.1–3). Markov (in this volume) notes that while Philostratus and Aelius Aristides promoted members of the local and provincial elite as the best allies to emperors, Dio's Maecenas excludes them in favor of the senators who serve on the emperor's *consilium*.

6 Platon 2016, 254 adopts Ando's vision of the senatorial-imperial relationship to examine the dysfunction between Tiberius and his Senate. For her, Dio assigns blame to both parties but tensions rise to a crisis when any third party takes precedence in the emperor's esteem over the Senate.

7 Paterson 2007, 129.

8 Paterson 2007, 141.

9 Langford 2021 represents the first, on Livia.

each of these women with individual personalities, a closer look reveals that they fit a pattern of representation in which they were harmful to the emperors, their families, and their subjects. Dio always mentions these women within the context of senatorial-imperial relations.[10] This is no accident; Tacitus and Pliny both express their preference for adopted succession at the beginning of the long second century. Pliny in particular takes aim at imperial women, as we shall see. Dio builds upon Pliny's distrust of imperial mothers and wives. He uses their actions, words, or sometimes mere mention in official settings to damage the reputations of their husbands and sons as rulers and men.[11] Though occasionally endowing the empresses with a redeeming quality, Dio ultimately unmasks each empress as ambitious, self-serving, and duplicitous, the ultimate beneficiary of dynastic succession and anxious to maintain her influence at any cost. In other words, Dio shaped the images of these dowager empresses to suit his self-interest as a senator and to cast aspersions on dynastic succession. His rhetorical use of the empresses to emasculate emperors and discredit dynastic succession becomes apparent through an examination of the overlapping discourses of Roman elite masculinity and ethical autocracy which Dio shared with Pliny and Tacitus.

In contrast to Suetonius' Livia, who undergoes a remarkable character shift between the biographies of Augustus and Tiberius, Dio's characterization of Livia is consistent even if her true, despicable character is slowly revealed over the course of her husband's reign. This consistency might be attributed to the trans-regnal nature of Dio's narrative which demanded a certain stability of character, even in the "minor" characters of the dowager empresses.[12] Thus the positive actions or characteristics that he permits dowager empresses

10 Langford 2021, 431–443 for Livia. For Julia Domna, see below. It is important to acknowledge that the contemporary portion of Dio's text is highly fragmentary and thus the full context in which Dio mentions Julia Domna is not always available. A particularly regrettable loss is the account of Julia Domna's death which, as Mallan 2013a rightly notes, was carefully constructed and survives only in fragments.

11 Langford 2021, 432, 437 demonstrates how the mere mention of Livia at an inopportune time caused Augustus embarrassment and highlighted his hypocrisy.

12 Pryzwansky 2008, 82. "[Suetonius'] secondary figures – who are mostly women, incidentally, because they are never biographical subjects in the *Caesares* – are changeable and malleable depending on the use to which the biographer puts them at any given time." Pelling notes that Dio shifts from a loose annalistic structure under the Republic to "bio-structuring" in the Empire. He notes that Dio's bio-structuring had interpretative implications, blending trans-regnal interests with the specific biographical ones (1997, 124). Pelling attributes the apparent change in Tiberius' character from Republican *princeps* to inscrutable and disengaged tyrant to the influences of Germanicus and Sejanus. He also notes that in the reign of Claudius, the bio-structuring allows Dio to employ imperial women and freedmen to highlight the emperor's subordinate position in his own home.

are employed to highlight the emperors' deficiencies as rulers and men.[13] Dio treats Julia Domna quite similarly to Livia, using her seemingly positive actions or traits as a foil to her men, only to reveal, at the end of her life that her piety and obedience disguised a lifelong ambition to rule alone in the style of Eastern queens like Nitocris and Semiramis.[14] When faced with losing her influence, the seemingly virtuous wife and devoted mother morphs into something dark and frightening, just as Livia had. This characterization of the empresses enables Dio to promote his senatorial vision of a just emperor who ruled with the Senate while emasculating those emperors who listened to or were manipulated by their wives and mothers, particularly in matters of succession.

1 Elite Masculinity and Ethical Autocracy Discourses

Many of the vices identified as tyrannical in the ethical autocracy discourse revolved around a ruler's inability to control his own body and emotions. These topics were also of interest to another contemporary discourse, elite Roman masculinity. Over the last several decades, gender-studies scholars have traced the ideologies of Roman masculinity, that is, the "systems of norms, values, and assumptions that were bequeathed to Roman men as part of their cultural patrimony," from at least the Middle Republic to the late Empire.[15] The discourse of elite Roman masculinity had to be reconfigured with the transition from the Republic to the Empire. Under Augustus, senators who were accustomed to competing against one another for triumphs and forensic glory learned to tame their ambitions, reorient their oratory toward panegyric, and find other, smaller arenas in which to express their superior masculinity and social or political prowess.[16]

Given that both discourses developed around the same time and were shaped by the same authors, it is worth pausing to examine more closely the nature and relationship between the two. Both discourses were organized around one overarching binary opposition, i.e., ethical autocracy/tyranny and masculinity/effeminacy; subcategories further refine and describe the main binary oppositions (See Table 7.1). Notably, several of the subcategories

13 Plin. *Pan.* 83.3.

14 Scott 2017 argues that Dio subverted later Severan propaganda that claimed legitimacy through Severus by making Julia Domna the link between the two halves of the dynasty. He also played up the foreign and feminine qualities of Domna to cast the later Severans in this negative light.

15 Williams 2010, 3.

16 On elite Roman masculine discourse see among others, Foucault 1986; Alston 1998; McDonnell 2006; Connelly 2007; Williams 2010.

of the two discourses overlap. The nature of binary opposites forces the subjects under analysis to belong to one category or the other, with little opportunity for subtle characterization. The desirable qualities are always associated with masculinity and ethical autocracy, and their opposites, with tyranny and effeminacy. In both discourses, the positive qualities were difficult to achieve and remarkably easy to lose. Furthermore, once a man or ruler showed himself lacking in one aspect of self-control, say lust, he was suspected of being guilty of all the vices, such as greed and envy.[17]

TABLE 7.1 Binary oppositional pairs in elite masculinity and ethical autocracy discourses[a]

Masculine qualities	**Effeminate qualities**	**Overlapping categories**	**Autocratic virtues**	**Autocratic vices**
Dominance	Submission	Justice, right order	*iustitia*, δικαιοσύνη	*omnia venalia*
Masculine strength	Effeminate weakness	Courage	*virtus, fortitudo*, ἀνδρεία, ἀρετή	*vis*
Moderation	Excess	Temperance	*moderatio, temperantia, continentia*, σωφροσύνη, ἐγκράτεια	*libido luxuria*
		Piety	*pietas*, εὐσέβεια, ὁσιότης	*impietas, deos neglegere*
Active in control	Passive controlled	Relationship with subordinates	*liberalitas, indulgentia, humanitas*, φιλανθρωπία	*crudelitas saevitia*
Active penetrating	Passive penetrated	Sexual behavior	*pudens*	*stuprum*

a This table compiles the various virtues and vices identified within the two discourses. Columns 1–2 come from Williams 2010, 138–140. Column 3 demonstrates the commonalities between the discourses. Column 4 represents the autocratic virtues as found in Noreña 2009. Column 5 are the vices Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus associate with tyrannical behavior as found in Dunkle 1971.

17 Williams 2010, 185. Real men were few and far between, notes Williams, and everyone else was deemed effeminate, including "defective" men, but also slaves, freedmen, most foreigners, and women. Williams restricts his comment to the discourse of masculinity. That the same is true of ethical autocracy discourse becomes apparent below.

Indeed, the primary difference between the ethical autocracy and elite masculinity discourses lay in scope rather than subject. Each discourse assumes that justice is adherence to right order, which prioritizes the greater good over the lesser, while injustice is the opposite. The ability to exert control over one's body, emotions, and desires is thus an expression of masculinity and the maintenance of personal justice, prioritizing the mind or soul over bodily desires. Justice in social and political settings demanded that a ruler dominate subjects, that a *paterfamilias* control his household, and that an *imperator* command his soldiers. The mention of the empresses allows our authors to play with the overlapping categories of these discourses, explicitly engaging with one while inviting the reader to extend the characterization to the other, unexpressed discourse. The emperors' interactions with their women allow Dio to critique the state of the empire through the imperial *domus*.[18]

2 The Senate and Imperial Women

At the dawn of the Empire, members of the Senate struggled to come to terms with what it meant to live under a *princeps*. They also found new rivals in the court culture developing in the *domus Augusta*.[19] In 35 BCE, the Senate began to award titles and privileges to Livia and Octavia which, though likely initiated at the prompting of Octavian, were an acknowledgment of the public prominence and influence of imperial women. The presence of women in the public eye and their acknowledged influence must have been upsetting for some contemporary senators. Others, however, sought to capitalize on Livia's influence by flattering the empress. It was perhaps these senators who, after Augustus' death, were behind the several honors the Senate offered her, most of which Tiberius refused.[20] Even after her death, though, her name and image

18 Langford 2021, 428–431.

19 On the evolving relationship between the Senate and imperial women, see Swan 2004, 6. On the succession ideologies of the second and third centuries, see Hotalen 2020, 1–78. On the dynamics of the imperial *domus* and the disproportionate power that women, freedmen and slaves hold because of their proximity to the emperor, Paterson 2007. On the threat that third parties posed to the senatorial-imperial relationship, see Platon 2016.

20 Tate (this volume), is undoubtedly right when she suggests that (like Tiberius) Dio preferred his imperial women to stay out of politics. As I have argued elsewhere, Tiberius perhaps refused the titles offered to Livia by the Senate so as to discourage his mother from taking the limelight without awaiting his approval. Her public prominence and meddling in imperial affairs not only embarrassed her son, but also emasculated him, as will be explained below in the discussion on elite masculine discourse. That Livia's defiance of the

continued to carry weight: Galba sought legitimacy by associating himself with her on his coinage (*BMC* 5–11, Galba).

Tensions between the Senate and imperial women become apparent in our sources at the beginning of the long second century, after senators had suffered under emperors like Nero and Domitian whose only qualification for the job was their lineage. Pliny and Tacitus offer senatorial critiques of dynastic succession that portray imperial women as both threats to an emperor's legacy and promoters of dynastic succession.[21] In his *Panegyricus*, Pliny hailed Nerva's adoption of Trajan as the best strategy to ensure future emperors were just, dedicated leaders; he also advocated selecting imperial successors from among the "best men," i.e., the Senate. The text as we have it now is a heavily edited version of the speech he delivered before Trajan and the Senate in 100 CE. In a letter to Vibius Severus, Pliny claimed that the *Panegyricus* was designed to celebrate the excellence of the emperor while also shining a beacon on the path for future leaders to follow (*Ep.* 3.18.3 *posteris velut e specula lumen quod sequantur ostendere*). Pliny's frequent use of second-person verbs throughout the speech make it evident, however, that he sought to advise Trajan as well as future emperors. Well aware of the dangers entailed in advising an emperor, Pliny thus offers a survey of Domitian's personal vices and leadership failings while attributing to Trajan all the qualities of an *optimus princeps*. Treating the emperor as he wished him to become, Pliny advised Trajan on all the matters that concern us here, especially prioritizing his relationship with the Senate above all others, keeping imperial women and freedmen in their place, and celebrating the virtues of an adopted succession.

In an effort to convince Trajan to treat his senatorial colleagues as co-rulers, Pliny drew a strong contrast between Domitian's pretense of friendship towards his *amici principis* and Trajan's genuine affection for them (*Pan.* 85.2–7):

> *Etenim in principum domo nomen tantum amicitiae, inane scilicet inrisumque remanebat. Nam qui poterat esse inter eos amicitia, quorum sibi alii domini alii servi videbantur? Tu hanc pulsam et errantem reduxisti: habes amicos quia amicus ipse es.... Diligis ergo cum diligaris, et in eo quod utrimque honestissimum est, tota gloria tua est; qui superior factus descendis in omnia familiaritatis officia, et in amicum ex imperatore*

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traditional feminine norms served to highlight the masculinity of her men suggests that both she and her son were out of control.

21 Tac. *Hist.* 1.14–16. Tacitus was less vocal in calling for adopted successors from the Senate than Pliny, but his enthusiasm is nonetheless clear in the speech he places in Galba's mouth. See Hotalen 2020, 1–78 on the succession ideologies of the second and third centuries.

> *submitteris, immo tunc maxime imperator cum amicum agis. Etenim cum plurimis amicitiis fortuna principum indigeat, praecipuum est principis opus amicos parare.*
>
> In the Emperors' palace nothing remained of friendship but the name, now empty and derided. For how could friendship survive between men thus divided, the one half feeling themselves the masters, the other half their slaves? It was you, Caesar, who brought her back from exile, to find a home again; you have friends because you know how to be one.... And so you love as you are loved; all honour to both sides, though the glory is all yours since it is you who step down from your superior status to carry out all the duties of friendship, descend from being emperor to be a friend – though, in fact, you are never more emperor than when you fill the role of friend, for a prince needs every kind of friendship to maintain his position, and so his first care is to provide himself with friends.[22]

Pliny's injunction to the emperor to love his *amici principis* had particular importance for those senators who felt slighted by Domitian's neglect or outright hostility towards the Senate. The difference between being a slave and being a subject was having some say in the management of the empire, in ruling beside the emperor.[23]

Rather than critique the principate as an institution, though, Pliny placed the blame for bad emperors squarely on the shoulders of imperial women. Even as Pliny congratulates Trajan on his unprecedented path to the principate, he seeks to defuse any influence that imperial women might wield in the succession process (*Pan.* 7.5–6):

> *Nec decet aliter filium adsumi, si adsumatur a principe. An senatum populumque Romanum, exercitus provincias socios transmissurus uni successorem e sinu uxoris accipias, summaeque potestatis heredem tantum intra domum tuam quaeras? non totam per civitatem circumferas oculos et hunc tibi proximum, hunc coniunctissimum existimes, quem optimum*

22 Radice 1969, 522. All translations of ancient texts are drawn directly or slightly adapted from the Loeb Classical Library. Radice notes the precarious nature of the friendship between the emperor and his handpicked advisory council, the *amici principis*, many of whom would have been prominent senators.

23 Roller 2001 explores the master/slave trope common in speaking on senatorial-imperial relations. The trope was also employed in elite masculinity discourse, though McDonnell 2006, 178–180 sees it in the relationship between adult sons still under the *manus* of their *paterfamilias*.

> *quem dis simillimum inveneris? Imperaturus omnibus eligi debet ex omnibus; non enim servulis tuis dominum, ut possis esse contentus quasi necessario herede, sed principem civibus daturus et imperatorem.*
>
> This is the only fitting way to adopt a son if the adopter is an emperor; for when it is a case of transferring the Senate and People of Rome, armies, provinces, and allies to a single successor would you look to a wife to provide him, or seek no further than the four walls of your home? No indeed, you would search through all your subjects, and judge him the closest and dearest to you whom you find to be the noblest and dearest to the gods. If he is destined to rule the people, one and all, he must be chosen from among them all, for no natural law can satisfy you when you are not appointing an overlord for your household of cheap slaves, but a prince and emperor for the citizens of Rome.

Pliny rejects the traditional pattern of Roman inheritance as an unsuitable method for selecting an imperial successor because it was contaminated by the ambitions of imperial women. He portrays the son and dynastic successor, whether a biological son or a stepson later adopted, as twisted and unnatural, tainted by association with his mother and his experience limited to the four walls of the home. Such a successor was hidden from the purifying light of public scrutiny and was most comfortable in the imperial *domus* with tyrannical women ruling over mere slaves (*servulis tuis dominum*). By contrast, a candidate adopted from the "the whole state" (that is, the Senate) would be a successor blessed by the gods, chosen (one surmises) for his merit and experience. By locating the natural son within the empress' lap (*e sinu uxoris*), not only does Pliny infantilize the dynastic successor, but he also sullies him with his mother's menstrual blood. A woman's *sinus* was the origin of pollution so toxic that it could sour grapes, corrode metal, and kill crops.[24] It was also the seat of feminine capriciousness and lust.[25] Pliny capitalizes on this misogynistic medical discourse to paint dynastic successors as the products of female domestic tyrants while candidates adopted from the Senate were masculine, just, and reasonable.

The efforts of Pliny and Tacitus to discourage dynastic succession pitted these authors against nature and custom; nature instilled in an emperor affection for his wife and children while *pietas* demanded their loyalty to his families. Roman society deemed it natural for a son to inherit his father's estates, employing adult adoption only when there were no sons to receive

24 Langford 2013, 89.

25 Plin. *HN* 7.13.64–7. See also Flemming 2000, 153, 258–259.

the inheritance. This would have been an emperor's inclination as well, one that imperial wives and mothers likely encouraged.[26] As Hekster convincingly argues about Marcus Aurelius' selection of Commodus, passing over a natural son in favor of another successor would have constituted a death sentence for the emperor's own son. And even this most devoted and philosophical of emperors, we should recall, selected his son despite misgivings regarding his suitability for the office.[27]

It was not just succession that made imperial women problematic for Pliny. Later, he warns Trajan that the wrong sort of woman poses a threat to his reputation both as a ruler and a man. Leaders who failed to either tame or get rid of unsuitable wives were deemed deficient rulers, since "their relative failure as husbands denied them complete success as citizens" (*Pan.* 83.4: *et ne maximi cives haberentur, hoc efficiebatur, quod mariti minores erant*). In the next breath, Pliny assures the emperor that his own (unnamed) wife is the very model of modesty and temperance because she had been shaped by Trajan himself. Indeed, Pliny's vision of the proper role for imperial women can be summed up in one pithy *sententia*: "There is glory enough for a woman in obedience" (83.7–8: *nam uxori sufficit obsequi gloria*).

Despite his disappointment at Severus' reversion to dynastic succession, Cassius Dio had to be more circumspect than Pliny, and thus he never states plainly his preference for adopted succession.[28] Still, Madsen notes Dio's preference for older, experienced men selected from the ranks of the Senate, as is evident from his depictions of Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian.[29] Dio also shares with Pliny and Tacitus a hostility for imperial women because of their presumed influence over the succession process.

Imperial women surely had their own perspectives regarding the senatorial-imperial relationship, but these are lost to us. Precisely how ambitious the historical empresses were or whether they actually attempted to dominate

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26 This is not to say, however, that imperial women did so out of ambition, as Pliny suggests and Dio explicitly charges.

27 Hekster 2001; Peachin 2007; 126–152; Hotalen 2020, 1–78. Despite Pliny's efforts to discredit dynastic succession, scholars have suggested that even adopted emperors clung to dynastic principles, selecting their successor from the closest male relatives so as to retain power within the family.

28 Madsen 2016, 158.

29 Ando 2016, 569, however, asserts that Dio was less interested in how an emperor obtained office than defending the Senate's right to give a new emperor its imprimatur. He envisions this as a kind of gift exchange that offers the emperor legitimacy in exchange for his fair treatment of the Senate. Ando is surely right concerning the exchange of favors between the Senate and new emperor, but so too is Madsen's assertion that, given the chance, Dio would have opted for an experienced successor chosen from the Senate. On the succession of Hadrian, see Davenport & Mallan 2014, 637–668.

their sons will likely always be a matter of speculation. Reading between the lines, however, it is evident that the empress' personal safety was dependent upon her husband or son holding the principate. Dio's Augustus admits as much while discussing with Livia what to do about the conspiracy of Cnaeus Cinna: "Do you not see how many are attacking both me and *our* sovereignty?" (55.14.3: ἢ οὐχ ὁρᾷς ὅσοι καὶ ἐμοὶ καὶ τῇ ἀρχῇ ἡμῶν ἐπιτίθενται; emphasis mine). Augustus presents himself ruling with his wife, which Livia reiterates later in the discussion (55.16.2):

> ἡ οὖν Λιουία φράσω ἔφη μηδὲν κατοκνήσασα ἅτε καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἴσου σοι ἔχουσα καὶ σωζομένου μέν σου καὶ αὐτὴ τὸ μέρος ἄρχουσα δεινὸν δέ τι παθόντος ὃ μὴ γένοιτο, συναπολουμένη.
>
> I have an equal share in your blessings and your ills, and as long as you are safe, I also have my part in reigning, whereas if you come to any harm (Heaven forbid!) I shall perish with you.

Dio thus recognizes that the stakes for imperial women in succession were very high. Dynastic succession guaranteed a life of comfort and privilege, while any other arrangement might mean an unwelcome marriage, exile, or even execution. It was unlikely that an adopted successor or usurper would treat the widowed empress and her children well since their mere existence invited conspirators to rally around them. Even if an empress' son were to safely inherit the principate, however, she may not have been safe; one need only recall Nero's plot to kill his mother Agrippina or Caracalla's accidental wounding of Julia Domna in the assassination of Geta. Though an uncontested dynastic succession did not guarantee the happiness of a dowager empress, it could nevertheless at least protect her from immediate harm from would be usurpers. Dio does not acknowledge this probable anxiety of imperial mothers but attributed their desire for dynastic succession to the fear of losing their influence, an ambition to dominate their sons, or a desire to rule alone. In doing so, Dio warns his audience of the danger of trusting imperial wives or mothers completely, however supportive, chaste, and loving they might appear. It is my contention that he does so, like Pliny, in order to teach emperors that ruling well (that is, acknowledging the Senate as their closest ally) was in their self-interest, while dynastic succession was not.[30]

30 Sion-Jenkis 2016, 730–735 notes that Dio acknowledged the unique public role of the empresses, but resented them when they manipulated imperial policy or overstepped the extraordinary titles and privileges that the Senate had awarded them.

3 Julia Domna and Severus

In the first essay in this series, I argued that Dio couched every appearance of Livia within a discussion concerning senatorial-imperial relations. Her mention allowed him to comment upon the performance of her husband and son as leaders in the public realm and men in their own homes.[31] Unfortunately, the fragmentary state of Dio's contemporary history renders this methodology problematic when approaching Julia Domna. Eleven of the fourteen passages mentioning her come from Xiphilinus, who compressed Dio's text considerably. The contexts in which Julia Domna appears in the epitomes may not, therefore, be identical with Dio's original text.[32] Even so, the senatorial-imperial relationship lurks behind each mention of the empress.

Julia Domna appears in only four passages under the reign of Severus, and Dio employs each to explore Severus' relationship with the Senate, particularly concerning dynastic succession.[33] The first is in a series of seven omens and dreams that foretold Severus' rise to power and is preserved only in Xiphilinus. Early in the new emperor's reign, Dio compiled a political pamphlet of these and other dreams and omens that foretold Severus' ascension (73[72].23.1–3). He presented the pamphlet to the emperor who responded enthusiastically to Dio's work in a complimentary letter. That night, Dio reported that he was commanded in a dream to write history and goes on to describe inserting the pamphlet into his larger work.

Dio' pamphlet indicates that he was a partisan of Severus early in his reign, but this stands in strong contrast to the disillusionment with which he peppers his account of Severus' march on Rome and his meeting with the Senate.

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31 Barrett 2002, 155, posited that Dio's Livia was based upon "the conduct of Julia Domna" but that the historical Livia was far less political. Barrett is not specific about what precisely he means by "conduct," but my sense is that he assumes that she sought a share of imperial power that Livia did not. Evidence for Julia Domna's influence, however, is hard to come by. As I argue in Langford 2013, scholars have confused Julia Domna's visibility in literary and numismatic portraits with political influence (1–6). Like Barrett, Goodyear suggests that Dio's Livia was shaped by Agrippina the Younger (as cited in Barrett 2002, 238). Bertolazzi 2015 rejects Julia Domna as a model for Livia, concluding that for Livia, Dio was more of a compiler of evidence than an historian. He rejects any connection in this passage between the two empresses. I agree with him.

32 Mallan 2013a, 737 notes: "In Boissevain's reconstruction of Dio's text, there are fourteen passages involving Domna. Of the fourteen passages, eleven are preserved in Xiphilinus' Epitome. However, of the five references to Domna which appear in the extant portion of Dio's text for these books (preserved by Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1288), Xiphilinus preserves only three, and comparison of these passages with Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1288 reveal that the passages in Xiphilinus have been compressed."

33 Cass. Dio 75[75].3; 76[75].16; 77[76].4.4; 77[76].16.5.

His description of Severus' entrance into Rome as "the most brilliant scene I have ever witnessed" (75[74].1.4: καὶ ἐγένετο ἡ θέα πασῶν ὧν ἑόρακα λαμπροτάτη) bespeaks a type of optimism that probably characterized his political pamphlet. In what is probably the same vein, Dio describes the emperor's promises not to execute any senator, "like the good emperors of old" (75[74].2.1: οἱ πρῴην ἀγαθοὶ αὐτοκράτορες).[34]

Yet Dio elsewhere supplies less flattering details of that day. In his narrative of Octavian offering his veterans a donative after defeating Marc Antony and Cleopatra, Dio reported that while Severus was delivering his first speech to the Senate, his soldiers surrounded the Curia and terrified both the senators and the emperor himself. They demanded ten thousand *sestertii*, the same amount Octavian had given his troops.[35] Severus managed to win their favor despite offering them only one thousand apiece (46.46.7). This detail foreshadowed a troublesome relationship between the emperor, his Senate, and his troops. Even so, Severus was determined to show himself a champion of the Senate that day, requiring it to decree that anyone who broke the oath would be considered public enemies – they and their children. Dio's early enthusiasm for Severus died a bitter death along with Julius Solon, a drafter of the law and among the first the emperor executed. Gone too were senatorial hopes for privileging the senatorial-imperial relationship above all others (75[74].2.3):

> καὶ πολλὰ μὲν ἡμῖν οὐ καταθύμια ἔπραττεν … καὶ τὸ μέγιστον ὅτι μὴ ἐν τῇ τῶν συνόντων οἱ εὐνοίᾳ ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τῇ ἐκείνων ἰσχύι τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς σωτηρίας ἐποιεῖτο.
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> There were many things Severus did that were not to our [i.e., the Senate's] liking … especially because he placed his hope of safety in the strength of his army rather than in the good will of his associates [i.e., in the Senate].

It is on the heels of this disillusionment that Dio inserted the dreams and omens that had earlier appeared in his political pamphlet. The marvels reported there must have rung hollow in Dio's later years.

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34 Dio reports that Marcus Aurelius wrote to the Senate after Faustina's death, "May it never happen that any one of you should be slain during my reign either by my vote or by yours" "μὴ γὰρ γένοιτο," ἔφη, "μηδένα ὑμῶν ὑπ᾽ἐμοὶ μήτε τῇ ἐμῇ μήτε τῇ ὑμετέρα ψήφῳ σφαγῆναι" 72[71].30.2. Marcus appears to have meant this promise, and I suspect that it was he whom Dio and other senators may have hoped Severus intended to emulate. Colin Bailey pointed out in the first draft of this essay that Dio also reports Hadrian making similar promises that he almost immediately broke (69.4). This may have signaled to readers that Severus, like Hadrian, had no intention of keeping his promise. While this may be true, I think Dio's initial optimism concerning Severus was genuine, and he may well have hoped Severus was a new Marcus.

35 See also *HA Sev.* 7.6–7.

Significantly, Julia Domna's first appearance in Dio's narrative appears in one of the dreams of the *omina imperii*.[36] In it, Julia Domna legitimates Severus' reign by connecting him to Marcus Aurelius – one of the good emperors of old. Dio reports that Severus dreamt the wife of Marcus Aurelius, Faustina, was preparing the wedding chamber for himself and Julia Domna in the Temple of Venus, "near the imperial Palace" (75[74].3.2: μέλλοντί τε αὐτῷ τὴν Ἰουλίαν ἄγεσθαι ἡ Φαυστῖνα ἡ τοῦ Μάρκου γυνὴ τὸν θάλαμόν σφισιν ἐν τῷ Ἀφροδισίῳ τῷ κατὰ τὸ παλάτιον παρεσκεύασεν). As Treggiari noted, the preparation of the wedding chamber was a duty assigned to the *pronuba*, customarily the bride's mother.[37] Faustina's role as *pronuba* suggests a familial connection between the two women as well as between Severus and Marcus Aurelius. Severus would later formalize his claim to a connection with Marcus by his self-adoption into the Antonine clan. The location of the dream further cemented the connection between the two families: The Temple of Venus was associated with marriage, not least of all because it housed the silver statues of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina, which had been erected by decree of the Senate in 176. It was upon this altar, Dio explains elsewhere, that Roman brides and their intended husbands offered sacrifices (72[71].31.1).[38] The preparation of the wedding chamber in the Temple of Venus, the foundress of the Roman people, suggested that the wedding between Severus and Julia Domna was of importance to the state. Only one other imperial wedding – to my knowledge – is advertised as a public vow (*vota publica*). Reverse legends on Antoninus Pius' imperial coinage feature the marriage of Marcus and Faustina as a *vota publica*, a vow that had public significance because it was destined to produce children who would occupy the imperial throne (*RIC* 3 Antoninus Pius 434).[39] Contextualized in this fashion, Julia Domna's appearance legitimizes Severus by connecting him to the Antonine family but also hints that their offspring will also occupy the imperial throne. Dio may not have noticed the connection between the marriage in the Temple of Venus and a new dynasty when

36 For an interpretation of how each of the dreams worked to portray Severus as emphatically male, Roman, and beloved of the gods, see Langford 2008, 134–137.

37 Langford 2008, 135. For the role and meaning of the *pronuba*, see Treggiari 1994, 315.

38 It may also have been here that the marriage between Severus and Julia Domna took place. Weiss 2012, 398 sees the outlines of Severus' *cursus honorum* reflected in the dreams, thus dating the wedding to spring 187. He further situates it in Rome, before the silver statues of Faustina the Younger and Marcus Aurelius. Besides this dream, I know of no other evidence for consummating marriages in temples.

39 Langford 2013, 33. Notably on this coin, Faustina the Elder serves as her daughter's *pronuba*, standing between the couple. The *RIC* editors identify this figure as Concordia, but I think the hairstyle and the traditional assignment of the *pronuba* role to the bride's mother suggests that the figure is Faustina the Elder. Weiss identifies the figure as Venus (2012, 397).

he wrote the pamphlet, but he probably saw it when he compiled the contemporary portion of his *Roman History*. At that point, Severus' initial attempts to align himself with the promises of the good emperors of old – Marcus Aurelius chief among them – and Severus' execution of Julius Solon must have embittered Dio towards the emperor. His disillusionment must have grown greater still when Severus defeated Albinus in 197, delivered a fiery condemnation of his critics in the Senate, and executed twenty-nine senators who had actively supported his rival (76[75].7.3–4, 8.4). The dream that featured Julia Domna was studded with promises for a bright future in which Severus was the new Marcus. But it also foreshadowed the founding of a dynasty, a detail that Dio may have overlooked in his earlier enthusiasm.

4 Julia Domna and Plautianus

Julia Domna's next appearances in Dio's narrative are in a section assembled from Xiphilinus and the *Excerpta* in which the outrageous behavior and ultimate demise of Plautianus are described. In these episodes, Dio presents Julia Domna as a victim who suffered humiliation at the hands of the Praetorian prefect. Her philosophical restraint serves as a memorable foil to the excesses of Plautianus. Dio allows Julia Domna these seemingly stoic moments not to celebrate the empress, but because her victimization allows Dio to villainize Plautianus, the greater threat to the primacy of senatorial-imperial relationship. These seemingly virtuous qualities will be unmasked as self-serving, conniving, and ambitious when the empress becomes a greater threat to the primacy of the Senate.

Dio reports that Plautianus, one of the emperor's kinsmen and the Praetorian prefect, fulfilled his ambition to be the sole and permanent Praetorian prefect by killing his colleague, Aemilius Saturninus. Dio launches into additional evidence of Plautianus' ambition and greed, capping his villainy with the posthumous revelation that he had castrated more than a hundred noble boys and men so as to surround his daughter with eunuchs. "So we saw the same persons both eunuchs and men, fathers and impotent, emasculated and bearded" (76[75].14.5: καὶ εἴδομεν τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἀνθρώπους εὐνούχους τε καὶ ἄνδρας, καὶ πατέρας καὶ ἀόρχεις, ἐκτομίας τε καὶ πωγωνίας).

The physical emasculation that Dio ascribes to Plautilla's attendants echoed the emperor's own subordination and passivity, that is, his descent into tyranny and effeminacy. Indeed, Dio blamed Severus for failing to check the excesses of Plautianus who had "power beyond all men, equaling even that of

the emperors themselves" (76[75]14.6: ἀφ᾽ οὗ δὴ οὐκ ἀπεικότως ὑπὲρ πάντας τὸν Πλαυτιανόν, καὶ ἐς αὐτοὺς τοὺς αὐτοκράτορας, ἰσχῦσαι ἄν τις εἴποι). Severus once wrote about Plautianus, "I love the man so much that I pray to die before he does" (76[75].15.2: καὶ διάδοχον τῆς αὐταρχίας ὡς εἰπεῖν ἔχειν ηὔξατο, καί ποτε καὶ ἐπέστειλε· "φιλῶ τὸν ἄνδρα ὥστε καὶ εὔχεσθαι προαποθανεῖν αὐτοῦ"), which Dio, and perhaps others, took to mean that Severus hoped that his prefect would succeed him.

Dio's use of Julia Domna as a foil to Plautianus echoed a likely rivalry between the two historical figures, especially regarding the question of succession. For Julia Domna and her sons, the smooth transfer of power to Caracalla and Geta was their best hope for surviving Severus, especially given the excesses and cruelty attributed to Plautianus. The marriage between Plautilla, his daughter, and Caracalla in 204 was a major coup for the prefect and seemed to solidify his position. Afterwards, Plautianus appeared in imperial inscriptions and state art, even on the Porta Argentarii. Caracalla was the fly in Plautianus' ointment not least of all because he hated both his wife and his father-in-law. Ultimately, the disastrous marriage only accelerated Plautianus' inevitable conflict with Julia Domna and her sons (76[75].15.6–7):

> καὶ οὕτω καὶ ἐς τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ὁ Πλαυτιανὸς αὐτοῦ κατεκράτει ὥστε καὶ τὴν Ἰουλίαν τὴν Αὔγουσταν πολλὰ καὶ δεινὰ ἐργάσασθαι· πάνυ γὰρ αὐτῇ ἤχθετο, καὶ σφόδρα αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸν Σεουῆρον ἀεὶ διέβαλλέν, ἐξετάσεις τε κατ᾽ αὐτῆς καὶ βασάνους κατ᾽ εὐγενῶν γυναικῶν ποιούμενος. καὶ ἡ μὲν αὐτή τε φιλοσοφεῖν διὰ ταῦτ᾽ ἤρξατο καὶ σοφισταῖς συνημέρευεν·
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> So greatly did Plautianus have the mastery in every way over the emperor, that he often treated even Julia Augusta in an outrageous manner; for he [Plautianus] cordially detested her and was always abusing her violently to Severus. He used to conduct investigations into her conduct as well as gather evidence against her by torturing women of the nobility. For this reason, she began to study philosophy and passed her days in company with sophists.

In the remaining sentences of the passage, Dio explicitly contrasts Julia Domna's response to Plautianus' abuse with the prefect's gluttony and molestation of noble boys and girls. We learn that Plautianus, who knew everything, hypocritically kept his wife in secret, allowing her to see no one, including Severus and the empress. Both Mallan and I posited that Dio endowed Julia Domna with positive traits in order to highlight the inadequate leadership of

the men around her, especially Plautianus and, later, Caracalla[40]; in doing so, Dio draws on the elite masculine discourse. Julia Domna's choice to withdraw from court to study philosophy resembles *virtus*, a variety of self-restraint elusive to many men (including Plautianus and Severus) and all but the most extraordinary women.[41]

But Julia Domna was useful as more than a foil. Severus' treatment of her allows Dio to critique the emperor's poor leadership and effeminacy. Dio employs the empress to deflate the mighty warrior whose *virtus* was celebrated on imperial coinage and state art (*RIC* 4.1 Septimius Severus 146B). The emperor's failure to defend his wife from Plautianus' abuses or to get rid of her, as Pliny advised Trajan to do with intractable women, points to Severus' passive inactivity, an effeminate characteristic in a man, and a tyrannical quality in a ruler. Given the numerous instances in which Severus yielded to his prefect, Dio may also be hinting that there was a sexual relationship between the two, with the emperor, scandalously, playing the part of the passive *pathicus* to his friend's active penetration.[42]

More than this, however, the relationship between Severus and Plautianus, as Dio describes it, threatened Caracalla's succession and, by extension, the safety and security of Julia Domna and Geta. Though Dio does not specify the nature of Plautianus' investigations into the empress' conduct, the prefect's torture of noblewomen suggests adultery.[43] Notably, Dio neither confirms nor denies these suspicions, leaving the question of the empress' fidelity unresolved.[44] Given the questionable reputation of some sophists and philosophers, Julia Domna's choice to withdraw from court to study philosophy, literally to "spend her days with sophists" (σοφισταῖς συνημέρευεν), did not necessarily clear her of sexual infidelity.[45] In dynastic succession, the empress' sexual fidelity was

40 Langford 2013, 23–48 and Mallan 2013a, 742–743 both note that Julia Domna serves as a foil for Plautianus and Caracalla. Mallan 2013a, 756 notes an uncanny resemblance between Dio's obituaries of Julia Domna and of Marcus Aurelius.

41 Williams 2010, 139. "*Virtus* is the ideal of masculine behaviour that all men ought to embody, that some women have the good fortune of attaining, and that men derided as effeminate conspicuously failed to achieve."

42 Herodian (3.10.6) does suggest a sexual relationship, but with Severus as the active partner.

43 Bertolazzi 2018 suggests that Plautianus suspected Julia Domna was guilty of conspiring with the emperor's enemies, the former supporters of Pescennius Niger who lived near or around the empress' hometown of Emesa.

44 As he did with Livia, Dio thus plants a seed of doubt concerning the character of the empress without taking responsibility for the veracity of the charge.

45 E.g., Lucian *Piscator*.

a matter of state security. If Severus were a cuckold, Caracalla's status as the son and designated successor would be jeopardized. Dio thus emasculates the emperor and creates doubt concerning Julia Domna's character while also undermining Caracalla's legitimacy and dynastic succession.

Finally, using Julia Domna as a foil to Plautianus allowed Dio to play down the empress' political influence at court, which some scholars suggested was unprecedented for imperial women.[46] In this passage, however, Dio downplays her influence and increases the *pathos* of a wrongfully accused woman to focus on Plautianus' ambition and tyrannical behavior. His decision to do so was perhaps because the prefect posed a greater immediate threat to the relationship the Senate shared with Severus than the empress did. Whatever his motivations, it is unlikely that Dio intended to evoke sympathy for the empress rather than horror of Plautianus and his castration of noble men, his torture of noble women, and his sexual violation of noble boys and girls. These acts violated civil rights and senatorial privilege; the fact that the emperor yielded to such a man underlined his poor leadership and his failure to prioritize his relationship with the Senate over his Praetorian prefect.

In each of the empress' remaining appearances during Severus' reign, Dio strengthens the association of Julia Domna with adultery. A few sentences after his report of Plautianus' investigations into the empress' conduct, we learn that he refused to allow anyone to see his own wife, Severus and the empress included. Dio coyly refuses to reveal the reasons for Plautianus' hesitations, but, given his attempts to preserve Plautilla's virginity by surrounding her with eunuchs, he may have claimed that he refused the empress admittance because of her suspected adultery. This is speculation based upon the clues that Dio provides, but this is quite the point: Because Dio refuses to tell us, we are left to guess the worst.

Julia Domna's next appearance comes when the empress, sitting beside her daughter-in-law Plautilla, learns of the prefect's murder. A messenger presented them with a few hairs from his beard and announced, "'Behold your Plautianus,' thus causing grief to the one and joy to the other" (77[76].4.4: "Ἴδετε τὸν Πλαυτιανὸν ὑμῶν," κἀκ τούτου τῇ μὲν πένθος τῇ δὲ χαρὰν ἐνέβαλεν). Plautilla's grief was not without fear, one imagines, especially given her husband's hostility. But Julia Domna's joy at the death of the prefect suggests that

46 Most recently, Levick 2007, but see also Williams 1902; Ghedini 1984; and Barrett 2002, 155. In Langford 2013, I have argued quite the opposite, that there is little evidence for Julia Domna's power, only for her promotion. Scott 2017 argues that Julia Domna's actual influence is difficult to determine based on evidence from Dio.

she was either a poor student of philosophy or a master at deception. If she had only been persecuted by Plautianus, as Dio suggested, we would expect Julia Domna to feel relief in finally escaping the clutches of the prefect. But her expression of joy undermines her philosophical pretensions, revealing her hatred for Plautianus and perhaps her unfulfilled ambition to rule alone.

Sandra Bingham and Alex Imrie have recently challenged the preference of modern scholars for Dio's version of the execution of Plautianus over Herodian's. Dio's rendition depicts Caracalla trumping up the evidence so as to frame the prefect for conspiracy. However, this preference does not account for Dio's intense hatred of Caracalla, so evident later in the narrative of his own reign. Bingham and Imrie employed numismatic and literary evidence to argue that it was Plautianus who conspired against Severus and Caracalla, not the other way around. They connect Dio's report of the emperor's brother, Septimius Geta, and his deathbed revelation exposing Plautianus' ambitions with the "Geta faction" active in Rome from 202 to 204.[47] They suggest that the two may have conspired to remove their mutual enemy, Caracalla, and by extension, Severus.

Bingham and Imrie's reassessment of Herodian and Dio's accounts helps to explain Julia Domna's appearance in the Plautianus passages, as well as her withdrawal and reappearance after his death. Indeed, as Andrew Scott has recently argued, Julia Domna was far more involved in court politics than Dio lets on.[48] Scott sees her as a sort of quasi-regent under Plautianus and again during Caracalla's sole reign, fulfilling the duties that were left unattended by both. Scott's thesis has merit; if Julia Domna wielded no influence at court, it is unlikely that she would have been a target of Plautianus' abuse.[49] Though the empress' active promotion of her sons' succession and protection of her own interests does not seem unlikely to me, it is evident that Dio had his own motivations for depicting her and other third parties like Praetorian prefects as detrimental to a just state in which the emperor turned to the Senate for advice.

Dio reports that the death of Plautianus did little to heal the strained relationship between Severus and the Senate. In a meeting of the Senate to discuss the conspiracy, Severus refused to condemn his friend's hubris, though he acknowledged for his love and honor for him (77[76].5.2). Before he allowed the full story of his friend's treachery to be told, he ordered all those but the most prominent to leave the chamber "so as to make it clear, through his refusal

47 Bingham & Imrie 2015, 87 who cite Kemmers 2011, 279.

48 See also Bertolazzi 2018.

49 Scott 2017, 425–427.

to reveal anything to them, that he did not altogether trust them" (77[76].5.3: ἐκβαλὼν ἐκ τοῦ συνεδρίου τοὺς οὐκ ἀναγκαίους, ἵν' ἐκ τοῦ μηδὲν διηγήσασθαι ἐνδείξηται ὅτι οὐ πάνυ σφίσι πιστεύει). Dio could not state more baldly his impatience with the emperor's refusal to privilege the Senate's advice.

In his final assessment of Severus' reign, Dio again mentions Julia Domna, this time within the context of the emperor's legislation against adultery. Dio notes that when he was consul, some three thousand cases of adultery appeared in his docket (77[76].15.4). This leads smoothly into his anecdote concerning Julia Domna teasing the wife of the Caledonian chieftain Argentocoxus about the rumored promiscuity of Caledonian women. The chieftain's wife retorts, "Better by far do we fulfill the demands of our natures than Roman women: We openly have sex with the best men whereas you are mounted in secret by the worst" (77[76]15.5: πολλῷ ἄμεινον ἡμεῖς τὰ τῆς φύσεως ἀναγκαῖα ἀποπληροῦμεν ὑμῶν τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν· ἡμεῖς γὰρ φανερῶς τοῖς ἀρίστοις ὁμιλοῦμεν, ὑμεῖς δὲ λάθρᾳ ὑπὸ τῶν κακίστων μοιχεύεσθε [my translation]).

The Caledonian woman's remark again calls into question the empress' sexual fidelity, and its appearance in the context of the emperor's severe and impractical social legislation is significant. The legislation created more work for the consul while failing to curb the promiscuity of noble women. Dio reports that there was little inclination to prosecute these cases, which suggests that Severus was out of touch with the Senate and their relationships with their wives. With the juxtaposition of sexual infidelity and the empress, the suspicions born from Plautianus' investigations are intensified and augmented. The innuendos of the empress' adultery also serve to undermine the legitimacy of her sons, at least one of whom, Caracalla, Dio hated.

5 Julia Domna and the Reign of Caracalla

The next time Dio mentions Julia Domna, she is back in Rome with her fractious sons, now emperors. Despite the prayers and sacrifices of the Senate for harmony between the two young men, omens foretold disaster (78[77]1.5–6). Senatorial anxiety was probably behind the extraordinary honors and titles that she received in 212: *Pia*, *Felix*, *Mater Senatus*, and *Mater Patriae*.[50] By awarding *Pia* and *Felix* to Domna, the Senate called upon the empress to maintain harmony between her sons, while with the titles *Mater Senatus* and *Mater Patriae* self-adopted itself and the empire into the imperial family. These

50 Langford 2013, 134–136 on the justification for dating these titles to 212.

titles paralleled the empress' earlier title, *Mater Castrorum*, that Severus had prompted the Senate to award her in 194. Severan propaganda had long advertised Julia Domna as a guarantor of peace; now was the time, the titles seem to suggest, to demonstrate those peacekeeping skills.[51]

The familial harmony that Severan propaganda promised and that both Julia Domna and the Senate longed for, however, proved elusive. In December 212, less than a year into their joint reign, Caracalla tricked his mother into inviting his brother Geta to her apartments, purportedly to put aside their rivalry (78[77].2.3–6):

> ἐπεὶ δὲ εἴσω ἐγένοντο, ἑκατόνταρχοί τινες ἐσεπήδησαν ἀθρόοι, παρὰ τοῦ Ἀντωνίνου προπαρεσκευασμένοι, καὶ αὐτὸν πρός τε τὴν μητέρα, ὡς εἶδέ σφας, προκαταφυγόντα καὶ ἀπό τε τοῦ αὐχένος αὐτῆς ἐξαρτηθέντα καὶ τοῖς στήθεσι τοῖς τε μαστοῖς προσφύντα κατέκοψαν ὀλοφυρόμενον καὶ βοῶντα· 'μῆτερ, τεκοῦσα τεκοῦσα, βοήθει, σφάζομαι.' καὶ ἡ μὲν οὕτως ἀπατηθεῖσα τόν τε υἱὸν ἐν τοῖς ἑαυτῆς κόλποις ἀνοσιώτατα ἀπολλύμενον ἐπεῖδε, καὶ τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐς αὐτὰ τὰ σπλάγχνα τρόπον τινά, ἐξ ὧν ἐγεγέννητο, ἐσεδέξατο· καὶ γὰρ τοῦ αἵματος πᾶσα ἐπλήσθη, ὡς ἐν μηδενὶ λόγῳ τὸ τῆς χειρὸς τραῦμα ὃ ἐτρώθη ποιήσασθαι. οὔτε δὲ πενθῆσαι οὔτε θρηνῆσαι τὸν υἱόν, καίπερ πρόωρον οὕτως οἰκτρῶς ἀπολωλότα, ὑπῆρξεν αὐτῇ (δύο γὰρ καὶ εἴκοσι ἔτη καὶ μῆνας ἐννέα ἐβίω), ἀλλ' ἠναγκάζετο ὡς καὶ ἐν μεγάλῃ τινὶ εὐτυχίᾳ οὖσα χαίρειν καὶ γελᾶν· οὕτω που πάντα ἀκριβῶς καὶ τὰ ῥήματα αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ νεύματα τά τε χρώματα ἐτηρεῖτο· καὶ μόνῃ ἐκείνῃ, τῇ Αὐγούστῃ, τῇ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος γυναικί, τῇ τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων μητρί, οὐδ' ἰδίᾳ που ἐπὶ τηλικούτῳ παθήματι δακρῦσαι ἐξῆν.
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> But when they were inside, some centurions, previously instructed by Antoninus [Caracalla], rushed in together and struck down Geta, who at the sight of them had run to his mother, hung about her neck and clung to her bosom and breasts, lamenting and crying: "Mother that didst bear me, mother that didst bear me, help! I am being murdered." And so she, tricked in this way, saw her son perishing in most impious fashion in her arms, and received him at his death into the very womb, as it were, whence he had been born; for she was all covered with his blood so that she took no note of the wound she had received on her hand. But she was not permitted to mourn or weep for her son, though he had met so

51 Langford 2013, 1–5, 104–107. Julia Domna's role as guarantor of peace is particularly apparent in coinage that advertises her *pietas* (e.g., *RIC* 4.1 Septimius Severus 886).

> miserable an end before his time (he was only twenty-two years and nine months old), but, on the contrary, she was compelled to rejoice and laugh as though at some great good fortune; so closely were all her words, gestures, and changes of colour observed. Thus, she alone, the Augusta, wife of the emperor and mother of the emperors, was not permitted to shed tears even in private over so great a sorrow.

Dio revels in the pathetic details of the murder, transforming Geta from emperor to infant. Julia Domna's lap, the source of Geta's birth, becomes the scene of his murder, his blood staining her body. The unnoticed wound to her hand allows Dio to employ Julia Domna's body as a metaphor for the empire. Her enforced silent grieving parallels the *damnatio memoriae.* Empress and subjects alike were traumatized by the slaughter. Too terrified to mourn openly, both she and the empire were compelled to ignore the regicide *and instead celebrate Caracalla's survival.* Dio savors the fall of the mighty and the empress' misery, noting ironically that happiness is seldom the companion of power. From the empress' perspective, however, she had little choice but to play along. Geta's death was ample evidence that she had failed in her role as advisor to the emperors. This is a point that was surely not lost on readers.

Like his father, Caracalla also chose to privilege the military above his relationship with the Senate. For this reason among others, Dio paints Caracalla as a monster, completely lacking the attributes of man and ruler. His first act as sole emperor was to address the legions, not the Senate, and he made clear to them his preference for their company: "Rejoice, fellow-soldiers, for I am now in a position to do you favours.... I am one of you," he said, "and it is because of you alone that I care to live, so that I may confer upon you many favours, for all the treasuries are yours" (78[77].3.1–2: "χαίρετε," εἶπεν, "ὦ ἄνδρες συστρατιῶται· καὶ γὰρ ἤδη ἔξεστί μοι εὐεργετεῖν ὑμᾶς." ... "εἷς" γὰρ ἔφησεν "ἐξ ὑμῶν εἰμί, καὶ δι᾽ ὑμᾶς μονους ζῆν ἐθέλω, ἵν᾽ ὑμῖν πολλὰ χαρίζωμαι· ὑμέτεροι γὰρ οἱ θησαυροὶ πάντες εἰσί").

When Caracalla did deign to appear before the Senate, he begged their indulgence not for the slight or the "the conspiracy of Geta," but because he had a sore throat. As he was leaving the Curia, almost as a second thought, he announced the pardon of all who had been exiled. Though this was surely designed to mollify the Senate, it evoked Dio's resentment and his complaint that all this action accomplished was to reinstall the worst criminals in Rome (78[77].3.3).

Julia Domna's appearance within Dio's account of Geta's assassination, quickly followed by Caracalla's seizure of power, fits the pattern we have thus far witnessed under Severus' reign: Each mention of the empress is couched in

a comment on the imperial-senatorial relationship, and it is based upon that relationship that Dio judges the emperor both as a man and a ruler. By choosing to report "Geta's conspiracy" first to the troops and only later to the Senate, Caracalla demonstrated which relationship he cared about most; the gifts that he offered to the soldiers and only afterwards to the Senate and the manner in which he gave them underline this impression.

Julia Domna's appearance in the remainder of Caracalla's reign is as a foil to her son.[52] When the empress once berated her son for his excessive spending on the military, Caracalla brushed her off by pointing to his sword and assuring her that, because of it, they would never run short of money (78[77].10.4: οὐκέθ᾽ ἡμῖν οὔτε δίκαιος οὔτ᾽ ἄδικος πόρος ὑπολείπεται … γὰρ ἂν τοῦτ᾽ ἔχωμεν, οὐδὲν ἡμᾶς ἐπιλείψει χρήματα). Dio also grumbles about the emperor's self-proclaimed abstemiousness, even as he gluttonously consumed every private or public gift he received (78[77].10.4). Elsewhere, Dio reported that Julia Domna offered her son "excellent advice" (78[77].18.2) – which he failed to heed. Caracalla's open mockery of his mother's concerns underlines Dio's disillusion with Severan propaganda that claimed the empress was the guarantor of family harmony; she could no more control Caracalla than she could summon Geta from the dead.

Although Caracalla did not take his mother's advice regarding military expenditures, Dio reported that he nonetheless entrusted his mother with his correspondence in Greek and Latin, and, furthermore, included her name and reports of her health in his missives to the Senate beside those of his own and the legions. While the Senate surely expected such news, his preference for the company of his troops and the reports of his mother's health again demonstrate his priorities. When senators sought an audience with the emperor, Caracalla reportedly kept them waiting for hours. The emperor acknowledged these tensions in a letter he sent to the Senate while in Antioch. After accusing them of laziness because they failed to fulfill their duties with enthusiasm he concluded, "I know that my behaviour does not please you; but that is the very reason that I have arms and soldiers, so that I may disregard what is said about me" (78[77]20.1–2: οἶδα μὲν ὅτι οὐκ ἀρέσκει τὰ ἐμὰ ὑμῖν· διὰ τοῦτο μέντοι καὶ ὅπλα καὶ στρατιώτας ἔχω, ἵνα μηδὲν τῶν λογοποιουμένων ἐπιστρέφωμαι).

In his portrayal of Julia Domna under the reign of Caracalla, however, Dio twice mentions an unflattering quality that the emperor inherited from his mother, her cunning or trickiness (τὸ πανοῦργος). One passage comes from the *Excerpta Valesiana* (Cass. Dio 78[77].6.1a = *Exc. Val.* 361), and the other from Xiphilinus (Cass. Dio 78[77].10.2 = Xiph. 330.32–331.21). The former reported

52 Mallan 2013a and Langford 2013 came to this interpretation independently.

that Caracalla sprang from three races and possessed all of their stereotypical vices but none of their virtues. Caracalla's fickleness (τὸ κοῦφον), cowardice (τὸ δειλὸν), and recklessness (τὸ θρασὺ) were Gallic qualities (apparently picked up as a child while Severus served as a provincial governor), while his cruelty (τὸ τραχὺ) and harshness (τὸ ἄγριον) he learned from his African father, and his craftiness (τὸ πανοῦργον) from his Syrian mother. By contrast, Xiphilinus mentions that he was very hotheaded (θερμότατος) and fickle (κουφότατος) but characterizes only his πανοῦργον as inherited from Julia Domna and characteristic of the Syrians.

Dio's attribution of πανοῦργον to Caracalla by way of his mother forces us to reconsider the trustworthiness and loyalty of the empress. This is not only because she was a woman and her interest in the imperial succession was self-interested, but also because she was a Syrian, and thus particularly crafty. It also underlines the empress' foreignness – a quality that Severan propaganda glossed over entirely – while foreshadowing her desire to rule alone like the other Eastern queens, Semiramis and Nitocris.[53] The statements cause the reader to pause and reconsider earlier depictions of Julia Domna, wondering whether perhaps she was quite as innocent or well-meaning as Dio earlier allowed us to believe in his contrasts with Plautianus and Caracalla.

Whatever positive characteristics or noble actions the reader may have attributed to Julia Domna during the narrative of her husband's and sons' reigns evaporate when she learns of Caracalla's murder. Dio reports that she beat her breast viciously and tried to starve herself to death, not from grief, but because she regretted her loss of power. After Macrinus wrote kindly to her (contrary to all expectation, no doubt), she rallied and, true to her real nature as a woman and a Syrian, began plotting with her bodyguard to seize the empire. "For she hoped to become sole ruler and make herself the equal of Semiramis and Nitocris, inasmuch as she came in a sense from the same parts as they did" (78[79].23.3: μνημονεύοντας, ὅπως αὐταρχήσῃ τῇ τε Σεμιράμιδι καὶ τῇ Νιτώκριδι, ἅτε καὶ ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν τρόπον τινὰ χωρίων αὐταῖς οὖσα, παρισουμένη). Scott notes that she shares an "initial resolve to die, attempts to stay alive, then a final decision to take one's own life, followed by a certain *aporia* regarding how exactly that death came about" with depictions of Semiramis and Cleopatra.[54]

53 Langford 2008, 134–137.

54 Scott 2017, 420 notes that Dio links the Empress to the mythical queens Semiramis and Nitocris in order to emphasize her foreignness and ambition. He connects the loose outlines of the lives of Julia Domna and Semiramis and detects intertextual echoes to Cleopatra's death scenes.

The final chapter of Julia Domna's life and the revelation of her ambitions, Dio suggests, were indicative of the *real* Julia Domna, whose previously latent ambitions to rule alone finally show themselves. Dio undermines even the handful of positive attributes and actions he allowed Julia Domna throughout her life by casting doubt on her sincerity, self-interest, and sexual fidelity. In doing so, he demonstrated that she also was an unreliable advisor. Scott posits that Dio's audience should have anticipated the denouement of Domna's attempt to rule by herself and perhaps he is right. After all, by the time Dio's readers encountered Julia Domna, they had already been subjected to the patterns of representation of the untrustworthy and conniving dowager empress in Livia and Agrippina. Why should the reader be surprised to learn that the same was true of Julia Domna?

6 Conclusion

Dio's depictions of the dowager empresses – including Julia Domna – reveal a pattern of representation that historians interested in ancient women must be aware of and resist taking at face value. The appearances of dowager empresses in Dio's narrative serve a rhetorical function and were never intended as accurate reports of the historical characters. Dio employs dowager empresses to demonstrate the dangers dynastic succession posed to the senatorial-imperial relationship, but also to emperors, their families, and their subjects. He also engages in the discourses of ethical autocracy and elite masculinity to cast aspersion onto emperors who failed to defend justice and right order, which, in Dio's mind, reflected the self-interest of senators.

The question arises: At whom were Dio's observations directed? Surely it was not primarily the senators, who could do little to effect change in the senatorial-imperial relationship. Who else could best learn from the lessons he propounds? I submit that, like Pliny, Dio envisioned his work reaching not just his senatorial colleagues but, more to the point, emperors. Pliny told Vibius Severus that his *Panegyricus* was designed "to shine a beacon on the path [Trajan's] posterity should follow" (*Ep*. 3.18.3: *posteris velut e specula lumen quod sequantur ostendere*), Dio's history reads like a pedagogical exercise. It illustrates examples of good and poor leaders and encouraged emperors to strive for ethical autocracy, which for Dio, Pliny, and Tacitus meant the responsible sharing of power with the Senate.

Perhaps it is only historians of women, clinging to any scrap of evidence, who are fooled into believing that there could have been any other ending to Julia Domna's life, or that Dio would have assessed her character positively. Her

investment in dynastic succession and the influence she wielded meant that whatever her personal traits, they had to be flattened, dismissed, or subjected to suspicion so as to encourage the emperors to embrace the Senate as their co-rulers and closest advisors.

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CHAPTER 8

Cassius Dio and the Ritual of the Imperial Admission

Mads Ortving Lindholmer

1 Introduction

The admission (the formal greeting ritual often called "the *salutatio*") was a widespread ritual of the Roman Empire, conducted daily by both emperor and the elite and, as I have argued elsewhere, it played an important part in imperial self-presentation and the construction of imperial power.[1] Scholarship on the imperial admission has been increasing in recent decades, but research has not explored how various writers represented the imperial admission and thereby responded to and influenced imperial self-presentation through this ritual.[2] This article will explore how Cassius Dio responded to the developments of the imperial admission in the Severan Age. Dio is a particularly apt case study both because of his distinctive approach to the imperial admission and since he, as a senator, almost certainly participated in the Severan admission.

In the Severan Age, certain developments occurred that may have caused Dio to approach the admission in a distinctive way. As argued elsewhere, the admissions of the Severans generally show marked continuities with those of their predecessors.[3] However, an important change still occurred: Traditionally, only the senators had had a formalised right to participate in the admission but, under Caracalla at the latest, certain equestrian offices entailed a similarly formalised right to participate. This is, for example, evident from

1 On the imperial admission, see especially Winterling 1999, 117–144. See also Turcan 1987, 132–139; Badel 2007; 2009; Goldbeck 2010, 263–281; Schöpe 2014, 38–59. Scholarship generally sees the Republican admission as important for the establishment and maintenance of political alliances, while the imperial admission is viewed as a rather unimportant remnant of the Republic and frequently as a burden to both parties: Winterling 1999, 235–238; Badel 2007, 152–159; Goldbeck 2010, 225–235, 283–285. For a contrasting perspective, see Lindholmer 2021b.

2 See, however, the brief remarks by Roberts 1993, 165–166; 2001, 556–557 on Prudentius.

3 Lindholmer 2021b, 36–51. *Contra* Schöpe 2014, 38–59.

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the following Caracallan *constitutio*, which includes mention of an admission (*Cod. Iust.* 9.51.1):[4]

> *Imp. Antoninus A. cum salutatus ab Oclatinio Advento et Opellio Macrino praefectis praetorio clarissimis viris, item amicis et principalibus officiorum et utriusque ordinis viris et processisset, oblatus est ei Iulianus Licinianus…*
>
> After the emperor Antoninus Augustus, having been greeted by Oclatinus Adventus and Opellius Macrinus, praetorian prefects, *clarissimi viri*, and also by the *amici* and the chiefs of staff, as well as men of both orders, had come out and Julianus Licinianus was presented to him…

I have treated this development at length elsewhere but the key in this context is that we have equestrians (praetorian prefects and chiefs of staff) who are included in the admission on the basis of their offices rather than their personal connections to the emperor.[5] Such formalised participation in the admission had traditionally only been enjoyed by senators.[6] More broadly, Dio viewed the Severan Age as a decline, a period of "iron and rust"[7] in which the emperors became increasingly autocratic and lacked respect for the senators and for Rome's traditions.[8]

It is arguably against this background that we should understand Dio's innovative use of the admission: As set out below, the *salutatio* becomes a literary *topos* (part of the broader literary theme of elite patronage) in the imperial period, exemplified most clearly in Seneca and Martial, but this *topos* centres specifically on aristocratic admissions. By contrast, Dio focused exclusively on the imperial admission, rather than its aristocratic counterpart, and

4 That this formalised participation of certain equestrian groups was indeed common in Caracalla's admission is clear from *SEG* XVII 759, lines 2–7, whose mention of the admission closely mirrors the *constitutio*. See also Lindholmer 2021b, 40–47.

5 See Lindholmer 2021b, 40–47.

6 This ties into broader perspectives on the Severan Age, where the Severans are often viewed as elevating equestrians to the detriment of senators: See, e.g., Bryant 1999, 25–27 who argues that Severus' promotion of family values was a deliberate tactic to depoliticise the senators. See also Potter 2004, 578–579. However, this position has also been criticised in recent years: See, e.g., Campbell 2005, 12–13; Lo Cascio 2005, 141; Davenport 2019, 501–508. On the other hand, Scott 2015 criticises Davenport 2012 for underestimating the hostility of Caracalla towards senators.

7 Cass. Dio 72[71].36.4 with Alföldy 1974. Translations of Dio are based on Cary's edition in the Loeb Classical Library (1914–1927), with some changes, and for other quoted authors I have likewise used the relevant Loeb editions.

8 As argued by Kemezis 2014, 139–149; Scott 2015; Madsen 2016, 154–158.

approached this ritual in a fundamentally different and more sophisticated manner. In the first section of this article, I will show that Dio connects the admission strongly to the emperor: He never mentions Republican admissions and describes the admission of the emperor far more consistently than, for example, Suetonius and Tacitus. Furthermore, rather than including the admissions of the elite in general, Dio only describes the admission of emperors and individuals who in Dio's eyes occupied this position *de facto*. Thus, Dio presents the admission as a key characteristic of the emperor and his power, which broke with the traditional self-presentation of the emperor as a first among equals through this ritual.[9]

Dio also attempts to influence and control the elite's perception of the imperial admission in three key ways.[10] Firstly, he comments numerous times on the emperor's behaviour at the admission: Positively described emperors presented themselves as the senators' equals at the admission, whereas negatively described emperors underlined their own superiority and the autocratic elements of their position. Dio thus uses the admission as an important tool in his characterisation of the emperor. Through this, more importantly, Dio is the first (surviving) writer to present a reasonably coherent image of the expected behaviour of the emperor at the admission. Secondly, Dio consistently avoids mentioning non-senatorial participants in the imperial admission and instead describes it as a ritual during which the emperor and the senators interacted.[11] Thirdly, in sharp contrast to his literary predecessors, Dio does not exclusively portray the admission as an event in which the emperor is greeted. Rather, he shifts between depicting the emperor and the senators as the grammatical object of the verb of greeting. Thus, Dio presents a distinctive picture of how the admission should be understood, how the emperor should behave and

9 First among equals: Lindholmer 2021b, 30–34, 51–55.

10 This raises the question of Dio's intended audience and there has been some contention on this area: e.g., Aalders 1986, 290–291 argued that Dio's explanations of Roman institutions show that he wrote for a Greek provincial audience with limited knowledge of Roman politics. However, Dio's work could easily have appealed to multiple audiences simultaneously. Indeed, recent research on Dio has highlighted his sophisticated interpretations of Roman history and Rome's ideal government (see n. 14 below), which would naturally have appealed to fellow senators. More specifically, the speech of Maecenas in Book 52, e.g., sets out in great detail how Rome should be governed, which again fits a senatorial audience better than a provincial one with limited knowledge of Roman politics. Potter 2011, 331 has recently asserted that Dio's "primary audience comprised members of his own class", and this echoes most scholarship in recent decades: See, e.g., Gowing 1992, 292–294; Hose 1994, 420–424; Kemezis 2014, 22. Overall, it is highly difficult to imagine that Dio's work was not aimed at least partly at his fellow senators.

11 The only exceptions are Augustus' more inclusive admissions held on festive days: Cass. Dio 56.26.3; 56.41.6 with Lindholmer 2021b, 19–20.

who should participate. This probably both reflected and shaped senatorial opinion and can be seen as an attempt to assert control over the perception of the admission and to influence the imperial self-presentation through this ritual – a reaction against the increased equestrian participation and emperors who did not live up to Dio's traditional ideal. Essentially, Dio accepted the importance of the imperial admission but exploited this to encourage imperial behaviour that was in line with senatorial expectations.

Thus, Dio's handling of the imperial admission cannot be understood except against the background of the development of this ritual under the Severans. On the other hand, Dio reveals that the elite were not simply passive consumers of imperial self-presentation through the admission but could support and undermine this self-presentation via literary representations of the admission. Fundamentally, the enactment of rituals and their literary representations constitute a constant power struggle over the meaning of ritual, and it is essential to explore both sides of this struggle.[12] Dio's handling of the admission also sheds oblique light on his ideal government: Elsewhere, I have argued that Dio's ideal government did not involve the Senate as a key deliberative forum but that it was still central to show the senators respect.[13] It is arguably in this larger context that we should see Dio's emphasis on imperial behaviour highlighting equality at the imperial admission. More broadly, this article also supports the recent re-evaluation of Dio as it underlines the thematic coherence and deliberate interconnectedness of his work, which communicated and strengthened his innovative and sophisticated interpretations.[14]

2 The Admission as a Symbol of Rulership

Although the admission was certainly important in the Republic and the first half-century of the Principate, writers from this period usually mention it only incidentally when it acts as the setting of some noteworthy event.[15] The first writer in our surviving sources who focused extensively on the admission is

12 My approach to ritual draws especially on Clifford Geertz, who sees ritual as a narrative: see Geertz 1973.

13 Lindholmer 2020. On Dio's ideal form of government and the role of the Senate in it, see, e.g., Madsen 2016; Platon 2016; Madsen 2020, 25–56, 87–92; 2019b 115–120. See also Madsen and Markov in this volume.

14 A flood of publications on Dio has emerged in the last decade especially. See, e.g., Kemezis 2014, 90–149; Fromentin, Bertrand, Coltelloni-Trannoy, Molin & Urso 2016; Lange & Madsen 2016; Burden-Strevens & Lindholmer 2019; Osgood & Baron 2019; Madsen 2019; Burden-Strevens 2020; Lange & Scott 2020; Lange & Madsen 2021.

15 On the Republican admission, see Goldbeck 2010.

Seneca, and he portrayed this ritual highly negatively. Regarding the *salutatores* (that is, the individuals attending the *salutatio*), he asks (Sen. *Brev*. 14.3–4):

> *Isti, qui per officia discursant, qui se aliosque inquietant, cum bene insanierint, cum omnium limina cotidie perambulaverint nec ullas apertas fores praeterierint, cum per diversissimas domos meritoriam salutationem circumtulerint, quotum quemque ex tam immensa et variis cupiditatibus districta urbe poterunt videre? Quam multi erunt, quorum illos aut somnus aut luxuria aut inhumanitas summoveat! Quam multi qui illos, cum diu torserint, simulata festinatione transcurrant!*
>
> Those who rush about in the performance of social duties, who give themselves and others no rest, when they have fully indulged their madness, when they have every day crossed everybody's threshold, and have left no open door unvisited, when they have carried around their venal greeting to houses that are very far apart – out of a city so huge and torn by such varied desires, how few will they be able to see? How many will there be who either from sleep or self-indulgence or rudeness will keep them out! How many who, when they have tortured them with long waiting, will rush by, pretending to be in a hurry!

This negative portrayal of the admission becomes highly widespread after Seneca. Martial, for example, complains that, as a *salutator*, "after a thousand labours, I am told by your door-keeper that you are not at home. Such is the outcome of my vain effort and my poor soaked gown" (Mart. 5.22.9–11: *te post mille labores, | Paule, negat lasso ianitor esse domi. | exitus hic operis vani togulaeque madentis*). Thus, the patron is arrogant and uninterested in his *salutatores*, who are themselves portrayed as fawning parasites, indulging in "madness" (*insanierint*). Essentially, this portrayal of the admission develops into a literary *topos*: The depiction of this ritual becomes highly consistent with the same stock elements and can be viewed as part of the broader literary motif of critiquing the workings of elite patronage.[16] Importantly, this *topos* of the negative admission becomes very widespread as it is found in a multitude of literary genres, such as letters, historiography, satire, philosophy and even medical works, and stretches from Seneca to Late Antiquity in both Greek and Latin literature.[17] Consequently, when Dio deviated from the stock portrayal

16 See, e.g., Saller 1983.

17 See, e.g., Amm. Marc. 14.6.12–13; Arr. *Epict. diss*. 4.10.20; Columella *Rust*. Pref. 9–10; Galen *On Examinations* 9.3; Hor. *Ep*. 1.7.74–76; Jer. *Ep*. 43.2; Juv. 3.127; Luc. *Nigr*. 21–22; Mart. 4.8.1;

of the admission and used this ritual in a fundamentally novel way, this would have been noticed by ancient readers.

One aspect of this novel approach is that Dio presented the admission as a fundamentally imperial ritual, whereas the traditional critique had been almost exclusively aimed at aristocratic admissions.[18] This is exemplified by the fact that Dio never includes an admission in his Republican narrative. This is striking since the admission was widespread in the Late Republic and Dio's original narrative survives for this period. Consequently, the lack of admissions in Dio's Republican narrative was likely a conscious choice. Indeed, in relation to the assassination attempt on Cicero orchestrated by Catiline, Cicero (in his first Catilinarian oration), Sallust and Plutarch all assert that this was supposed to happen during the admission.[19] Dio, by contrast, writes that "two men promised to rush into Cicero's house at daybreak and murder him there" (37.32.4: ὑποσχέσθαι δύο τινὰς ἔς τε τὴν τοῦ Κικέρωνος οἰκίαν ἅμα τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐσᾴξειν κἀνταῦθα αὐτὸν φονεύσειν). No greetings or other references to the admission are included, and Dio thus appears to have deliberately ignored this ritual here. The lack of admissions in Dio's Republican narrative suggests that he did not view the Republican admission as important in contrast to the imperial admission on which Dio focuses consistently. This is striking since scholarship generally asserts that it was exactly the Republican admission that had broader significance, while the imperial counterpart was an unimportant manifestation of the emperor's power.[20]

By contrast, Dio describes the admission of more emperors than any other ancient writer. Furthermore, it seems that Dio connected the admission to the role of the emperor since there is a pronounced pattern to the admissions of non-emperors included in his history: Dio only describes the admission of five non-emperors, namely Livia, the younger Agrippina, Julia Domna, Sejanus and Plautianus. The common denominator of these individuals is that Dio viewed all of them as having excessive power and as occupying a position of *de facto* ruler.[21] This suggests that Dio saw the admission as an essential symbol of power and rulership.

Let us begin by exploring Dio's presentation of the imperial women. Tacitus does not accord Livia a prominent role and Suetonius briefly asserts that

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Sen. *Ep*. 76.12; Stat. *Silv*. 9.48–50; Tac. *Dial.* 29.4.

18 Arr. *Epict. Diss*. 4.1.47 is a rare exception.

19 Cic. *Cat*. 1.9; Plut. *Cic*. 16.1; Sall. *Cat*. 28.1.

20 See, e.g., Winterling 1999, 235–238; Badel 2007, 152–159; Goldbeck 2010, 283–285.

21 On the admissions of these women in Dio, see briefly Bertolazzi 2015, 419–421. Mastrorosa 2019, 311–321 also emphasises the power of these women in Dio.

Tiberius alleged that Livia "claimed an equal share in the rule (*potentiae*)."[22] However, this theme is significantly more pronounced in Dio, who at length presents Livia as a second emperor.[23] Dio writes that decrees were passed in memory of Augustus "by Tiberius and Livia" and notes that "I have added the name of Livia because she, too, took a share in the proceedings, as if she possessed full powers" (56.47.1: ὡς καὶ αὐταρχοῦσα ἀντεποιεῖτο). Later in his narrative, Dio continues (57.12.2–3):

> πάνυ γὰρ μέγα καὶ ὑπὲρ πάσας τὰς πρόσθεν γυναῖκας ὤγκωτο, ὥστε καὶ τὴν βουλὴν καὶ τοῦ δήμου τοὺς ἐθέλοντας οἴκαδε ἀσπασομένους ἀεί ποτε ἐσδέχεσθαι, καὶ τοῦτο καὶ ἐς τὰ δημόσια ὑπομνήματα ἐσγράφεσθαι. αἵ τε ἐπιστολαὶ αἱ τοῦ Τιβερίου καὶ τὸ ἐκείνης ὄνομα χρόνον τινὰ ἔσχον, καὶ ἐγράφετο ἀμφοῖν ὁμοίως. πλήν τε ὅτι οὔτε ἐς τὸ συνέδριον οὔτε ἐς τὰ στρατόπεδα οὔτε ἐς τὰς ἐκκλησίας ἐτόλμησέ ποτε ἐσελθεῖν, τά γε ἄλλα πάντα ὡς καὶ αὐταρχοῦσα διοικεῖν ἐπεχείρει. ἐπί τε γὰρ τοῦ Αὐγούστου μέγιστον ἠδυνήθη καὶ τὸν Τιβέριον αὐτὴ αὐτοκράτορα πεποιηκέναι ἔλεγε, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐχ ὅσον ἐξ ἴσου οἱ ἄρχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρεσβεύειν αὐτοῦ ἤθελεν.
>
> For she occupied a very exalted station, far above all women of former days, so that she could at any time receive the senate and such of the people as wished to greet her in her house; and this fact was entered in the public records. The letters of Tiberius bore for a time her name as well and communications were addressed to both alike. Except that she never ventured to enter the senate-chamber or the camps or the public assemblies, she undertook to manage everything as if she were sole ruler. For in the time of Augustus she had possessed the greatest influence and she always declared that it was she who had made Tiberius emperor; consequently she was not satisfied to rule on equal terms with him, but wished to take precedence over him.

Livia is quite clearly here described as a second emperor and she even wishes to be the dominant one. Dio's mention that Livia was repeatedly greeted in her house and received "the Senate" is likely a reference to her admissions. Indeed, Dio here uses his preferred word for the admission, ἀσπάζομαι, and "the Senate" is often part of this ritual in Dio, as this chapter will show. Thus, Dio here uses Livia's admission as an example of how she was essentially an emperor, and it is worth noting that no other source mentions her admissions. Dio's use of the admission to construct Livia as co-emperor with Tiberius, therefore, seems

22 Suet. *Tib*. 50.2.

23 On Livia in Dio, see Sion-Jenkis 2016; Langford in this volume.

deliberate, which, in turn, indicates that the admission in Dio's eyes was a central part of being an emperor.

A similar pattern is observable in Dio's narrative of Agrippina.[24] She married Claudius and thereafter took complete control of affairs, which is manifested by Dio's narrative focus as he consistently narrates Agrippina's actions, while Claudius is often left ignored until he is murdered by Agrippina.[25] Dio asserts that "as soon as Agrippina had come to live in the palace she gained complete control over Claudius" (61[60].32.1: ὡς δ᾽ ἅπαξ ἐν τῷ βασιλείῳ ἡ Ἀγριππῖνα ἐγένετο, τόν τε Κλαύδιον ἐσφετερίσατο) and later she even removed two prefects from office since they would not yield to her.[26] She also often attended the emperor in public, both in relation to normal business and the reception of ambassadors.[27] Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Dio's portrayal of Agrippina parallels his avaricious emperors when he writes that she murdered numerous prominent individuals in order to amass wealth.[28] In short, Dio consistently portrays Agrippina as emperor. In Suetonius, Agrippina plays a relatively minor role, whereas Tacitus' portrayal is closer to Dio's since he writes that "all things moved at the fiat of a woman" (Tac. *Ann.* 12.7: *cuncta feminae oboediebant*). However, Dio is the only writer to use the admission in his portrayal of Agrippina's role under Claudius, and he appears to connect this ritual to her position as *de facto* emperor (Cass. Dio 61[60].31.1–3[a]):[29]

> Ὅτι τῆς Ἀγριππίνης οὐδεὶς τὸ παράπαν ἥπτετο, ἀλλὰ τά τε ἄλλα καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτὸν τὸν Κλαύδιον ἐδύνατο, καὶ ἐν κοινῷ τοὺς βουλομένους ἠσπάζετο· καὶ τοῦτο καὶ ἐς τὰ ὑπομνήματα ἐσεγράφετο. Ἠδύνατο δὲ πάντα, τοῦ Κλαυδίου κρατοῦσα καὶ τὸν Νάρκισσον καὶ τὸν Πάλλαντα οἰκειωσαμένη·

24 From Claudius onwards, Dio's narrative is generally not preserved in its original and we are instead reliant mainly on Xiphilinus but also the *Excerpta Constantiniana*. According to Mallan 2013a, 737–738 "Xiphilinus' method was to omit and compress his source material, rather than to paraphrase loosely, summarise or to alter significantly Dio's original wording. A similar method of copying Dio's wording almost verbatim was adopted by the compilers of the *Excerpta Constantiniana*." Consequently, if an admission is included by Xiphilinus or the *Excerpta*, it is extremely unlikely that this does not reflect Dio's original narrative and we can therefore use the descriptions of admissions preserved by these sources to gain some understanding of the function of the admission in Dio's original narrative. On Xiphilinus, see especially Mallan 2013b; Berbessou-Broustet 2016. See also Millar 1964, 195–203; Brunt 1980, 488–492; Fromentin 2013, 23–26; Treadgold 2013, 310–312.

25 Cass. Dio 61[60].31–35.

26 Cass. Dio 61[60].32.6[a].

27 Cass. Dio 61[60].33.7.

28 Cass. Dio 61[60].32.3. See also Cass. Dio 78[77].9.

29 Tacitus does mention Agrippina's admission in the reign of Nero (*Ann.* 13.18.5) but not in order to underline her power.

> No one attempted in any way to check Agrippina; indeed, she had more power than Claudius himself and used to greet in public all who desired it, a fact that was entered in the records. She possessed all power, since she dominated Claudius and had won over Narcissus and Pallas.

Dio again uses ἀσπάζομαι here to describe a repeated greeting, which is likely the admission. Furthermore, Dio has inserted noteworthy parallels to the description of Livia's admission here.[30] Dio notes, with almost identical language, that the admissions of Livia and Agrippina were entered into the public records (τὰ ὑπομνήματα) and that the imperial women received those who desired it (τοὺς ἐθέλοντας and τοὺς βουλομένους). This is probably meant to underline how untraditional it was at that time that women at the admission could receive whoever wished to attend, even prominent *salutatores* such as "the Senate". By contrast, Augustus controlled who was allowed to attend the admission of his daughter, Julia.[31] The admissions of Livia and Agrippina thus likely function to highlight their excessive power. Furthermore, these parallels to Livia's admission also suggest that the just quoted passage does, in fact, describe the admission of Agrippina. Thus, Dio portrays Agrippina as *de facto* emperor and immediately thereafter connects this to the admission. However, the intratextual parallels between these two imperial women in Dio also underline that the depiction of Agrippina should not be understood in isolation but as part of a broader theme of excessively powerful women, whose excessive power is highlighted by the inclusion of their admissions.

Dio's inclusion of Julia Domna's admission is likewise part of the construction of her as *de facto* emperor.[32] This construction is, for example, evident when Dio writes that Julia Domna, after Caracalla's death, "fell from power during her lifetime" (79[78].24.2: τῆς ἀρχῆς ζῶσα ἐξέπεσεν), and he also speaks of her ἐξουσία in this context.[33] Furthermore, Dio's inclusion of an obituary for Julia Domna mirrors his treatment of numerous emperors.[34] Julia Domna also fulfils several of the emperor's roles: Dio asserts that Caracalla generally "was staining himself with blood, doing lawless deeds, and squandering money" (78[77].18.2: ἐμιαιφόνει καὶ παρηνόμει καὶ τὰ χρήματα κατανήλισκεν). Caracalla,

30 Mastrorosa 2019, 315–321 likewise points to parallels between Livia and Agrippina in Dio, as well as between Livia and Julia Domna. See also Bono 2018, 88–89; Langford in this volume.

31 Suet. *Aug*. 64.2.

32 On Dio's Julia Domna, see, e.g., Mallan 2013; Scott 2017; Langford in this volume. On Julia Domna more generally, see, e.g., Langford 2013.

33 The use of ἀρχή, especially, presents Julia Domna as *de facto* emperor, as pointed out by Scott 2017, 419.

34 Cass. Dio 79[78].24 with Scott 2017, 427–428.

essentially, is portrayed as disregarding the duties of an emperor. Julia Domna is presented as a contrast to this (78[77].18.2–3):[35]

> τὴν τῶν βιβλίων τῶν τε ἐπιστολῶν ἑκατέρων, πλὴν τῶν πάνυ ἀναγκαίων, διοίκησιν αὐτῇ ἐπιτρέψας, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῆς ἐν ταῖς πρὸς τὴν βουλὴν ἐπιστολαῖς ὁμοίως τῷ τε ἰδίῳ καὶ τῷ τῶν στρατευμάτων, ὅτι σώζεται, μετ᾽ ἐπαίνων πολλῶν ἐγγράφων. τί γὰρ δεῖ λέγειν ὅτι καὶ ἠσπάζετο δημοσίᾳ πάντας τοὺς πρώτους καθάπερ καὶ ἐκεῖνος;
>
> [Caracalla] had appointed Julia Domna to receive petitions and to have charge of his correspondence in both languages, except in very important cases, and used to include her name, in terms of high praise, together with his own and that of the legions, in his letters to the senate, stating that she was well. Need I add that she publicly greeted all the most prominent men, precisely as did the emperor?

Thus, Julia Domna handled petitions and imperial correspondence, which were two key responsibilities of the emperor. The mention of Julia Domna's repeated greetings of the foremost men, just like the emperor, is almost certainly a reference to the admission. Thus, Julia Domna is in many ways constructed as co-emperor or even as dominant emperor by Dio, and the admission again plays an important role in this.[36] Indeed, Dio explicitly highlights that her admissions paralleled the emperor's. This presentation of Julia Domna stands in sharp contrast to the parallel source, Herodian, where Julia Domna is portrayed as the pitiable mother of the murdered Geta but never as powerful.[37] Thus, Dio is strikingly consistent in his use of the admission to craft his portrayals of Livia, Agrippina and Julia Domna as *de facto* emperors, and it is important to note that this is unparalleled in other sources. This suggests that the admission was an essential part of being an emperor in Dio's eyes.

Dio's portrayal of Sejanus and Plautianus and his inclusion of their admissions may support this theory. Just like the three imperial women explored above, Sejanus and Plautianus are consistently presented as *de facto* emperors, and the admission plays an important role in this presentation.[38] Dio mentions Sejanus' admission several times. The first is inserted before Tiberius' retreat to Capri (57.21.4):

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35 For the contrast in Dio between Julia Domna and Caracalla, see Mallan 2013, 743–751.

36 As argued also by Scott 2017, 419–428.

37 See, e.g., Hdn. 4.4.3.

38 Imrie 2021 outlines a number of other significant parallels between these individuals in Dio. On Dio's Plautianus, see also Mallan 2013a, 740–742.

> ἔς τε τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ οἵ τε ἄλλοι οἱ ἐλλόγιμοι καὶ οἱ ὕπατοι αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τὸν ὄρθρον συνεχῶς ἐφοίτων, καὶ τά τε ἴδια αὐτῷ πάντα, ὅσα τινὲς ἀξιώσειν παρὰ τοῦ Τιβερίου ἔμελλον, καὶ τὰ κοινά, ὑπὲρ ὧν χρηματισθῆναι ἔδει, ἐπεκοίνουν. καὶ συνελόντι εἰπεῖν οὐδὲν ἔτι χωρὶς αὐτοῦ τῶν τοιούτων ἐπράττετο.
>
> The leading citizens, including the consuls themselves, regularly resorted to Sejanus' house at dawn, and communicated to him not only all the private requests that any of them wished to make of Tiberius, but also the public business which required to be taken up. In a word, no business of this sort was transacted henceforth without his knowledge.

Sejanus is here presented as fulfilling the role of emperor since he receives requests from the most prominent citizens and is involved in all public business. The mention of leading citizens regularly going to Sejanus' house at dawn is almost certainly a reference to the admission, and Dio thus utilises this ritual in his presentation of Sejanus as quasi-emperor.

This presentation intensifies after Tiberius' move to Capri and is especially evident in the following passage (Cass. Dio 58.5.1–2):

> Ὁ δὲ Σεϊανὸς τοσοῦτος ἦν τῇ τε ὑπεροχῇ τοῦ φρονήματος καὶ τῷ μεγέθει τῆς ἐξουσίας ὥστε συνελόντι εἰπεῖν αὐτὸν μὲν αὐτοκράτορα τὸν δὲ Τιβέριον νησίαρχόν τινα εἶναι δοκεῖν διὰ τὸ ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ λεγομένῃ Καπρίᾳ τὰς διατριβὰς ποιεῖσθαι. σπουδαί τε καὶ ὠθισμοὶ περὶ τὰς θύρας αὐτοῦ ἐγίγνοντο ἐκ τοῦ δεδιέναι μὴ μόνον μὴ οὐκ ὀφθῇ τις αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ μὴ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὑστάτοις φανῇ· πάντα γὰρ ἀκριβῶς, καὶ μάλιστα τὰ τῶν πρώτων, ἐτηρεῖτο καὶ τὰ ῥήματα καὶ τὰ νεύματα.
>
> Sejanus was so great a person by reason both of his excessive haughtiness and of his vast power, that, to put it briefly, he himself seemed to be the emperor and Tiberius a kind of island potentate, inasmuch as the latter spent his time on the island of Capri. There was rivalry and jostling about the great man's doors, the people fearing not merely that they might not be seen by their patron, but also that they might be among the last to appear before him; for every word and look, especially in the case of the most prominent men, was carefully observed.

The mention of jostling at Sejanus' doors is likely a reference to the admission, and doors are indeed a recurrent feature of descriptions of this ritual.[39]

39 See, e.g., Cass. Dio 58.5.2; Columella *Rust*. 1.10; Sen. *Constant*. 14.2; Suet. *Tib*. 32.2.

The suggestion that this passage is a reference to the admission is supported by Dio's mention of an order of entry, which was a key feature of this ritual.[40] After this passage, Dio gives a short moral digression on the corruption that political success can cause and then describes the admission of Sejanus again: "On a New Year's day, when all were assembling at Sejanus' house, the couch that stood in the reception room utterly collapsed under the weight of the throng seated upon it" (58.5.5: ἐν δέ τινι νουμηνίᾳ πάντων συνιόντων ἐς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ Σεϊανοῦ ἥ τε κλίνη ἡ ἐν τῷ δωματίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἠσπάζετο, κειμένη πᾶσα ὑπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου τῶν ἰζησάντων συνετρίβη). Thus, Dio explicitly says that Sejanus was regarded as the *de facto* emperor and immediately thereafter mentions his admission twice, seemingly to prove this point.

This portrayal of Sejanus and Dio's use of the admission to construct it are distinctive: Suetonius only accords Sejanus brief attention. Tacitus' account of Sejanus is much fuller, but he portrays Sejanus as aiming for the throne rather than having attained it *de facto*, as in Dio.[41] Tacitus does include Sejanus' admission once, but only to inform the reader that Sejanus abolished this ritual to avoid envy, which was meant to facilitate his usurpation of the throne.[42] The use of the admission by Dio to construct Sejanus as a second emperor is thus fundamentally different from Tacitus.

Plautianus is the last of the five non-emperors whose admissions are included by Dio. After Plautianus' fall, a certain Coeranus was under attack due to his close connections to the former imperial favourite, but Coeranus claimed that (Cass. Dio 77[76].5.3):

> καὶ ὁσάκις γε ἐκεῖνοι πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ἀσπαζομένων αὐτὸν ἐσεκαλοῦντο, συνεφείπετό σφισι μέχρι τῆς κιγκλίδος τῆς τελευταίας, οὐ μέντοι καὶ ἐκοινώνει τῶν ἀπορρήτων.
>
> Whenever the others were invited into Plautianus' house in advance of the general throng of those who came to greet Plautianus, he had accompanied them as far as the last gate, yet he denied that he had shared in Plautianus' secrets.

This is quite clearly the admission since a large group of prominent men regularly come to greet Plautianus, and Dio uses ἀσπάζομαι, his normal word for this ritual. Importantly, just like the other non-emperors whose admissions

40 Sen. *Clem.* 1.10.1 with Lindholmer 2021b, 24–28. See also Winterling 1999, 131–134.

41 See, e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 4.41.1.

42 Tac. *Ann.* 4.41.1.

Dio includes, Plautianus is presented as *de facto* emperor by Dio.[43] Herodian does briefly intimate that Plautianus had a share in the imperial power when he writes that Septimius Severus "shared the rule with no one except this man" (Hdn. 3.10.6: οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἀλλ᾽ ἢ μερισάμενος πρὸς αὐτὸν τὴν ἀρχήν). However, this theme remains undeveloped in Herodian, and Dio takes a large step further in his presentation of Plautianus (Cass. Dio 76[75].14.6–7):

> ὑπὲρ πάντας τὸν Πλαυτιανόν, καὶ ἐς αὐτοὺς τοὺς αὐτοκράτορας, ἰσχῦσαι ἄν τις εἴποι. τά τε γὰρ ἄλλα καὶ ἀνδριάντες αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰκόνες οὐ μόνον πολλῷ πλείους ἀλλὰ καὶ μείζους τῶν ἐκείνων, οὐδ᾽ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις πόλεσι μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ Ῥώμῃ, οὐδ᾽ ὑπ᾽ ἰδιωτῶν ἢ δήμων μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπ᾽ αὐτῆς τῆς γερουσίας ἀνετίθεντο· τήν τε τύχην αὐτοῦ πάντες οἱ στρατιῶται καὶ οἱ βουλευταὶ ὤμνυσαν, καὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτοῦ δημοσίᾳ ἅπαντες ηὔχοντο.
>
> He had power beyond all men, equalling even that of the emperors themselves. Among other things, his statues and images were not only far more numerous but also larger than theirs, and this not alone in other cities but in Rome itself, and they were erected not merely by individuals or communities but by the very senate. All the soldiers and the senators took oaths by his Fortune, and all publicly offered prayers for his preservation.

Dio is again very explicit here: Plautianus had as much power as the emperor but was even more honoured. This theme is reemphasised shortly thereafter when an official refuses Severus' order to present a case, saying "I cannot do so, unless Plautianus bids me" (76[75].15.5: οὐ δύναμαι τοῦτο ποιῆσαι, ἂν μὴ Πλαυτιανός μοι κελεύσῃ). Furthermore, just after the mention of Plautianus' admission, Dio notes that Coeranus had prophesied that Plautianus would become emperor.[44] Plautianus' admission, which is only included in Dio, may thus also be understood as part of Dio's construction of the praetorian prefect as *de facto* emperor. Indeed, the reader is invited to understand the inclusion of Plautianus' admission in this way after Dio's similar use of this ritual to present Livia, Sejanus and Agrippina as *de facto* emperors.

In short, then, Dio describes admissions often compared to other sources but never includes a single admission unless the receiver is either the emperor or *de facto* occupies this position in Dio's eyes. That Dio's approach to the admission is no accident but a conscious choice is suggested by its distinctiveness:

43 As suggested briefly by Scott 2017, 426.

44 Cass. Dio 77[76].5.4.

Other authors see the admission as a fundamentally elite phenomenon in which the emperor participated. Furthermore, the emperor had traditionally mirrored the aristocratic admissions, thereby presenting himself as first among equals.[45] However, Dio's choice to only include (quasi-)imperial admissions suggests that he saw this ritual as central to the role of emperor and as distinct from the aristocratic admissions. Dio, then, breaks with both the literary tradition and the traditional imperial self-presentation at the admission and emerges as strikingly pragmatic about the emperor's distinctive and autocratic position.

3 Imperial Behaviour at the Admission

Dio's mentions of imperial admissions were not just automatically included but were deliberately shaped: Firstly, Dio uses the admission as a tool to characterise different emperors and thereby constructs expected imperial behaviour at this ritual. Secondly, Dio presents the imperial admission as a ritual populated only by senators. Lastly, in some imperial admissions, Dio uniquely presents the senators as the object of the emperor's greeting rather than *vice versa*. This can be seen as an attempt to influence the admission and the elite's perception of it for Dio's own and his fellow senators' benefit. Dio's approach contrasts fundamentally with his predecessors, such as Tacitus and Suetonius: When they mention the imperial admission rather than its aristocratic counterpart, they mainly mention it as a setting for important events or revealing anecdotes.[46] Furthermore, the imperial admission generally included various non-senatorial participants, mainly equestrians but also foreign ambassadors and allies, learned men, and even children on occasion. In contrast to Dio, other sources naturally mention these participants, and this holds true also for someone like Tacitus who (like Dio) wrote from a senatorial perspective.[47] Lastly, all other writers consistently portray the emperor as the object of the greeting.[48] Dio's distinctive approach may be seen as a reaction to the developments in the Severan Age where equestrians enjoyed a more formalised role in the imperial admission and where, in Dio's eyes, the Severan emperors

45 As argued in Lindholmer 2021b, 23–24, 30–34, 51–55.

46 See, e.g., Suet. *Aug*. 53.2; *Galb*. 4.1; *Tib*. 32.2; Tac. *Ann*. 11.22.1.

47 Non-senatorial participants: *CIL* VI 2169; Gell. *NA* 4.1.1; *HA Did. Iul.* 4.1; Philo *Leg*. 261; Sen. *Clem*. 1.10.1; Suet. *Aug*. 60; Tac. *Ann*. 11.22.1 with Winterling 1999, 122–125; Lindholmer 2021b, 19–20.

48 See, e.g., Suet. *Aug*. 53.2; *Galb*. 4.1; *Tib*. 32.2; Tac. *Ann*. 11.22.1.

increasingly rejected the traditional ideal of the senatorial emperor and the privileged position of the senators.

An example of Dio's distinctive use of the admission appears in his narrative of Tiberius.[49] It is inserted in the account of the first half of Tiberius' rule where he is, according to literary tradition, presented as an idealised counterpart to his later degeneration. Dio comments: "Tiberius was, moreover, extremely easy to approach and easy to address. For example, he bade the senators greet him in a body and thus avoid jostling each other" (57.11.1: καὶ μέντοι καὶ εὐπρόσοδος καὶ εὐπροσήγορος ἰσχυρῶς ἦν. τοὺς γοῦν βουλευτὰς ἀθρόους ἀσπάζεσθαι αὐτὸν ἐκέλευσεν, ἵνα μὴ ὠστίζωνται). This repeated greeting of the senators as a group is almost certainly a reference to the admission. Accessibility was a key feature of the ideal of the emperor during the Principate as it contributed to constructing him as a *primus inter pares*.[50] It is therefore noteworthy that Dio uses Tiberius' admission as an example of this quality. Essentially, Tiberius' behaviour at the admission becomes a mark of his positive rule. However, this passage also highlights the importance of refraining from violations of the admission's traditions and of being accessible to the senators in the context of this ritual. Lastly, it is noteworthy that the only participants mentioned in Tiberius' idealised admission are "the senators" (τοὺς βουλευτὰς). Dio is hereby presenting the imperial admission as essentially a senatorial ritual in which the emperor interacted with this group and not, as was actually the case, with numerous non-senators as well. Overall, then, Dio is reconfiguring the image of the admission here, creating and reinforcing expectations about imperial behaviour and expected participants in a way that suited the senators.

This use of the admission is likewise seen in Dio's narrative of Marcus Aurelius. Dio writes (72[71].35.4):

> ἠσπάζετό τε τοὺς ἀξιωτάτους ἐν τῇ Τιβεριανῇ οἰκίᾳ ἐν ᾗ ᾤκει, πρὶν τὸν πατέρα ἰδεῖν, οὐχ ὅπως τὴν στολὴν τὴν καθήκουσαν ἐνδεδυκώς, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἰδιωτικῶς ἐσταλμένος, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ γε τῷ δωματίῳ ἐν ᾧ ἐκάθευδε.
>
> He used always to greet the most worthy men in the House of Tiberius, where he lived, before visiting his father, not only without putting on the attire befitting his rank, but actually dressed as a private citizen, and receiving them in the very apartment where he slept.

49 On Dio's Tiberius, see Baar 1990; Platon 2016; Bono 2018.

50 See, e.g., Wilkinson 2012, 148–150. See also Wallace-Hadrill 1982.

At the admission, it was common to receive a smaller group first, often in the *cubiculum*, and it is likely this part of the admission that Dio is describing here.[51] Marcus is only *Caesar* here, but this description is inserted in the idealising narrative of his reign and clearly points towards Marcus' admirable behaviour as a ruler. It is noteworthy that Dio, as the only extant source, chooses to include the admission as one of the idealising elements in his positive depiction of this emperor. The admission thus becomes an important tool in Dio's presentation of model rulership and ideal interaction with the elite. As in ancient literature generally, Marcus is portrayed as a model emperor in Dio's narrative and functions as an example to be followed.[52] Consequently, Dio's depiction of his admission can also be seen as a way of constructing expected imperial behaviour: The emperor should only receive τοὺς ἀξιωτάτους in his *cubiculum*, a group that was no doubt (almost) exclusively senatorial in Dio's eyes. Furthermore, Marcus interacts with this group in a very egalitarian manner: They were received in the *cubiculum*, and Marcus refrained from donning the imperial dress, dressing instead as a private citizen. Dio's narrative thus emphasises that the emperor ought to avoid stressing his own superiority at the admission and only receive worthy individuals at this ritual.

The admission is also employed by Dio when presenting negative rulership, and Dio often focuses on imperial clothes, just as he does in the case of Marcus. This is, for example, evident in the reign of Nero.[53] He is, according to Dio, even worse than Caligula, and Dio focuses at length on his many transgressions, such as participation in musical and dramatic contests.[54] Another area in which Nero transgressed Roman traditions was the admission (62[63].13.3):

> τοὺς δὲ βουλευτὰς χιτώνιόν τι ἐνδεδυκὼς ἄνθινον καὶ σινδόνιον περὶ τὸν αὐχένα ἔχων ἠσπάσατο· καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐν τούτοις ἤδη παρηνόμει, ὥστε καὶ ἀζώστους χιτῶνας ἐν τῷ δημοσίῳ ἐνδύεσθαι.
>
> When he greeted the senators, he wore a short flowered tunic and a muslin neck-cloth; for in matters of dress, also, he was already transgressing custom, even going so far as to wear ungirded tunics in public.

51 Cass. Dio 65.10.5; 77[76].5.3–4; *Epit. de Caes.* 9.15; Plin. *HN* 15.38; Suet. *Vesp.* 21 with Lindholmer 2021b, 24–25.

52 See, e.g., Dio's praise of Marcus at 72[71].36.2–3. Kemezis 2014, 96 views Marcus Aurelius as the "emperor whom Dio most idealizes." Aalders 1986, 299; Scott 2015, 160 agree.

53 On Dio's Nero, see now Schulz 2019, 169–265.

54 Comparison with Caligula: Cass. Dio 61[61].5.1. General transgressions: See, e.g., 62[61].14.1; 62[61].20.1.

The standard dress at the imperial admission was the toga for all participants, and Nero's extravagant clothes exemplify a broader theme of effeminacy and decadence in Dio's depiction of this emperor.[55] Furthermore, numerous times throughout his *Roman History*, Dio underlines the importance of clothes: For example, the Romans were exasperated because Scipio Africanus wore a *himation*, and Caligula is also critiqued for his extravagant clothes.[56] By locating Nero's sartorial transgression in the highly regularised ritual of the admission, Dio heightens this transgression and the admission thus becomes a powerful tool to further stress that Nero was unfit to rule. Furthermore, in contrast to Marcus, Nero's choice of clothes broke with the traditional image of equality at the admission and underlined the imperial superiority instead. Dio's fierce critique of Nero in this passage, therefore, reinforces the importance of the image of equality that normally permeated the admission, which is arguably part of a broader emphasis in Dio on the importance of imperial respect for the senators. Lastly, it is noteworthy that even the criticised Nero had an admission with "the senators" (τούς βουλευτὰς), whereas no other participants are mentioned. Dio thus again presents the admission as an essentially senatorial ritual in which the emperor interacted with this group.

A very similar use of the admission is evident in Dio's narrative of Commodus. Dio was in fact in Rome and participated in Commodus' admission: "Before entering the amphitheatre he would put on a long-sleeved tunic of silk, white interwoven with gold, and thus arrayed he would receive our greetings" (73[72].17.3: πρὶν μὲν ἐς τὸ θέατρον ἐσιέναι, χιτῶνα χειριδωτὸν σηρικὸν λευκὸν διάχρυσον (καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γε αὐτὸν τῷ σχήματι ὄντα ἠσπαζόμεθα)). In this part of his history, Dio focuses at length on the un-Roman clothes of Commodus, and it is striking that the admission is one of the key areas chosen by Dio to highlight Commodus' rejection of tradition. The admission thus again becomes a tool to underline Commodus' lack of ability to rule. It is worth noticing that the normally scandal-loving Suetonius and the *Historia Augusta* also note the uncommon clothes of Nero and Commodus, respectively, but Dio is the only source to connect this to the admission.[57] It thus appears that Dio was especially ready to use the admission as a tool in his negative portrayal of certain emperors as effeminate and unfit to rule. Furthermore, like the description of Nero's admission, the critique of Commodus' clothes implicitly underlines that the toga was

55 Toga: Suet. *Aug.* 60 with Winterling 1999, 127–128; Lindholmer 2021b, 20. Nero: See, e.g., Cass. Dio 62[63].13 with Gowing 1997, 2580–2583.

56 Cass. Dio F. 57.62 with Jones 2019, 294; Cass. Dio 59.17.3. See also Cass. Dio 43.43.4; 62[63].17.5; 63[63].22.4. On clothes in Dio, see Freyburger-Galland 1993.

57 Suet. *Nero* 50–51; *HA Comm.* 8.8.

the only acceptable garment at the admission, since it emphasised equality between emperor and senators. Lastly, by referring to the senators as "us", Dio again presents an understanding of the admission as an exclusively senatorial ritual, even under the negatively portrayed Commodus.

A final example of Dio using the admission to negatively portray an emperor is found in the narrative of Elagabalus (80[79].14.4):

> ἠριούργει, κεκρύφαλόν τε ἔστιν ὅτε ἐφόρει, καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐνηλείφετο, ψιμυθίῳ τε καὶ ἐγχούσῃ ἐχρίετο. ἄπαξ μὲν γάρ ποτε ἀπεκείρατο τὸ γένειον, καὶ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ ἑορτὴν ἤγαγε· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτ᾽ ἐψιλίζετο, ὥστε καὶ ἐκ τούτου γυναικίζειν. καὶ πολλάκις καὶ κατακείμενος τοὺς βουλευτὰς ἠσπάζετο.
>
> [Elagabalus] worked with wool, sometimes wore a hairnet, and painted his eyes, daubing them with white lead and alkanet. Once, indeed, he shaved his chin and held a festival to mark the event; but after that he had the hairs plucked out, so as to look more like a woman. And often he was even reclining while he greeted the senators.

This passage is part of a lengthy critique that portrays Elagabalus as an effeminate, oriental monarch, and the description of his admission is meant to support this portrayal. The fact that Dio chose to use Elagabalus' behaviour at the admission to support the thoroughly negative portrait of this emperor again underlines that traditional comportment in this ritual was central in Dio's eyes. Reclining was, in fact, common for the smaller group received first at the admission and was a sign of close *amicitia*.[58] Elagabalus may have been attempting to extend this sign of *amicitia* to the senators as a whole, but Dio inserts it in a long list of Elagabalus' transgressions and effeminate behaviour, thereby framing his comportment at the admission highly negatively.[59] This is an excellent example of how literary representations of a ritual can affect the perception of the ritual itself, as Dio has attempted to influence the meaning of Elagabalus' reclining. More broadly, Dio again contributes to constructing senatorial expectations about how an emperor ought to behave at the admission: Reclining was unacceptable when receiving the senators as a whole, and standing is probably the implicitly preferred option. Lastly, Dio once again presents a picture of the imperial admission as including only "the senators" (τοὺς βουλευτὰς), which contrasts with the increasingly prominent role of equestrians at the admission of the Severans.

58 Cass. Dio 65.10.5; *Epit. de Caes*. 9.15; Suet. *Vesp*. 21 with Lindholmer 2021b, 20–21, 24–25.

59 On Elagabalus' transgressions of precedent in Dio, see Osgood 2016.

Thus, the imperial admission becomes a tool in Dio's characterisations of emperors and their ability to rule. Through his critique and praise of the behaviour of different emperors in this ritual, Dio is the first surviving writer to present a reasonably consistent model of the ideal imperial admission. Furthermore, Dio also presents the admission as a fundamentally senatorial ritual. This can be seen as an attempt to establish how emperors should behave at this ritual and who should participate. This likely shaped senatorial expectations and perceptions of the imperial admission, which put pressure on emperors to live up to an ideal that suited the senators.

4 Dio's Linguistic Approach to the Admission

To refer to the admission, Latin writers mainly used *salutare*, while Greek writers employed various words such as the neutral ἀσπάζομαι, or θεραπεύω which had connotations of flattery. Both Latin and Greek authors also often used phrases such as "they all went to his house in the morning".[60] Dio's use of ἀσπάζομαι to refer to the imperial admission is therefore not remarkable in itself. However, Dio's consistency is noteworthy, as all admissions of actual emperors in Dio, except one, are referred to with ἀσπάζομαι.[61] This consistency further underlines the importance with which Dio invested the imperial admission.[62] Furthermore, this neutral expression contrasts with Seneca's description, for example, of the admission as a "venal greeting" (Sen. *Brev*. 14.3: *meritoriam salutationem*) or Philostratus' use of θεραπεύω, which plays a part in his presentation of this ritual as base flattery.[63] This indicates that Dio, a participant in the Severan admission, did not view this ritual negatively as empty flattery. For Dio, the admission was rather a key arena for the interaction between the emperor and the senators.

More importantly, Dio is, in fact, unique in his depiction of greeter and greeted in the imperial admission: In other writers, the emperor is consistently placed as the grammatical object of the greeting verb, and this applies to both Latin and Greek writers.[64] This is, of course, natural since the *salutatores* came to the emperor's residence to greet him. However, in sharp contrast to the

60 Goldbeck 2010, 14–18.

61 The only exception is Cass. Dio 65[66].10.5, although this only describes the reception of *salutatores* in the *cubiculum*.

62 This consistency is also noted by Goldbeck 2010, 14–18.

63 Philostr. *VA* 7.31.2.

64 See, e.g., Philo *The Embassy to Gaius* 261; Suet. *Otho* 6.2; *Tib*. 32.2.

parallel sources, it is not necessarily the emperor who is portrayed as being greeted at the imperial admission in Dio. In fact, out of eleven imperial admissions, five have the emperor as the greeter.[65]

The pattern of greeter and greeted in Dio appears random as it does not depend on whether an emperor is described positively. For example, Marcus Aurelius while *Caesar* "used always to greet the most worthy men" (72[71].35.4: ἠσπάζετό τε τοὺς ἀξιωτάτους) but Nero's admission is presented in the same way: "When he greeted the senators …" (62[63].13.3: τοὺς δὲ βουλευτὰς […] ἠσπάσατο). Caracalla and Elagabalus are portrayed similarly.[66] On the other hand, Augustus, Tiberius, Commodus and Septimius Severus are all portrayed as *receiving* greetings at the admission. Augustus is arguably the ideal monarch in Dio; Tiberius and Septimius Severus receive somewhat mixed judgements; Commodus is criticised wholeheartedly.[67] This underlines that Dio's unique portrayal of greeters and greeted at the imperial admission is not tied to an evaluation of different emperors so that, for example, negatively described emperors receive greetings and *vice versa*. Furthermore, this portrayal of the admission is also clearly not tied to certain periods of Roman history. It is worth noting that this presentation of greeters and greeted also extends to the admissions of *de facto* emperors: Livia and Plautianus are the objects of greetings, whereas Agrippina and Julia are subjects of ἀσπάζομαι.[68]

Given Dio's highly instrumental use of the admission and the fact that previous writers had consistently portrayed the emperor as the object of the greeting, it is hard to imagine that Dio's unique portrayal of this ritual is an unconscious coincidence. The subject of ἀσπάζομαι would *a priori* seem to be the first to pronounce his greeting. This is central since the inferior party normally greeted first in Roman society.[69] Thus, Dio's changing subject of ἀσπάζομαι creates an overall impression of the imperial admission as a ritual in which neither party was fundamentally superior. Dio obviously knew that the emperor was the dominant party; indeed, this dominance was necessary

65 The emperor as the subject of ἀσπάζομαι: Cass. Dio 62[63].13.3; 72[71].35.4; 78[77].17.3; 78[77].18.3; 80[79].14.4. The emperor as the object of ἀσπάζομαι: Cass. Dio 56.26.2; 56.26.3; 57.11.1; 73[72].17.3; 75[74].3.2. In Cass. Dio 69[69].7.2 it is unclear whether the emperor is greeted or *vice versa*. Cass. Dio 65[66].10.5 is not counted here since the passage does not have a verb of greeting.

66 Cass. Dio 78[77].18.2–3; 80[79].14.4.

67 According to Rich 1989, 101–102, Dio's Augustus is "a model emperor both at home and abroad". Likewise, Giua 1983.

68 Cass. Dio 57.12.2, 61[60].33.1; 77[76].5.3; 78[77].18.3.

69 See also Mart. 3.95; Plut. *Mor*. 508a–b with Hall 1998; Lindholmer 2021b, 26.

to avoid civil war, according to Dio.[70] However, Dio repeatedly underlines the importance of presenting the emperor as notionally equal to the senators in the context of the admission, and Dio's changing allocation of the roles of greeter and greeted supports this presentation. Through this, essentially, Dio attempts to reframe the admission and present it as a ritual which highlighted equality rather than imperial superiority.

Scholarship commonly sees the imperial admission as a demeaning act of subservience on the part of the *salutatores*.[71] However, Dio's presentation of the imperial admission as a ritual based not on subservience but on equality stands in stark contrast to this scholarly viewpoint. Indeed, Dio uses language that is inconsistent with such a view, as he refrains from expressions such as θεραπεύω and instead employs the neutral ἀσπάζομαι. In Dio's eyes, individual emperors might act arrogantly, but the ritual itself was not thereby fundamentally changed, as indicated by the fact that Nero, Caracalla and Elagabalus are all portrayed as greeting the senators rather than *vice versa*.

5 Conclusion

This article has argued that Dio uses the imperial admission in a novel and sophisticated manner: Earlier treatments of the phenomenon of the admission had focused almost exclusively on criticising the workings of aristocratic admissions, while the imperial admission had mainly been mentioned incidentally. Dio broke forcefully with this, as he never engaged in the traditional moralising critique of the aristocratic admission. In fact, he only mentions admissions of emperors and individuals who *de facto* occupied the position of ruler in his eyes. This suggests that the admission was a key marker of rulership to Dio. Furthermore, Dio also uses the admission to characterise emperors and, through his critique and praise, he presents a picture of expected imperial behaviour at this ritual: Essentially, Dio consistently praises emperors who respected the traditional emphasis on equality at the admission and thereby avoided stressing their own superiority, while emperors who did the opposite are fiercely criticised. Moreover, Dio avoids mentioning non-senators at the admission and thereby presents this ritual as fundamentally senatorial, as an interaction between the emperor and the senators. Lastly, Dio uses neutral

70 According to Dio, equality breeds internal divisions: See, e.g., Cass. Dio F. 5.12, F 7.3. See also Lindholmer 2018a, 193–195. On the untenability of Dio's Republic, see, e.g., Lindholmer 2018; 2019a; 2019b; Burden-Strevens 2020.

71 Winterling 1999, 135–138; Badel 2007, 152–159.

language to describe the admission, and his changing depiction of greeter and greeted in this ritual is unique. Overall, Dio is the first writer to present a reasonably coherent picture of the admission, that is, how it should be understood, who should participate and how the emperor should behave.

The pre-Severan emperors had, in fact, traditionally emphasised equality between the emperor and the senators in the admission and, despite the new formalised position of certain equestrian groups, there is nothing to suggest that the Severans broke with this tradition of imperial self-presentation in the admission.[72] Dio, then, is not attempting to revolutionise the admission in a utopian fashion but simply to emphasise the importance of continuing respect for the traditions of this ritual. This would have been particularly pertinent in the period of "iron and rust" in which emperors, in Dio's eyes, no longer respected the ideal of the past. On the other hand, his presentation of the admission as a senatorial ritual can be seen as a reaction against Severan ritual developments: In this period, equestrian groups for the first time attained formalised participation in the imperial admission alongside the senators. Thus, Dio essentially tried to influence how the Severan admission was understood by presenting a highly consistent picture of this ritual that was in line with senatorial expectations.

However, this should not be seen as a naïve and reactionary attempt: Dio likely aimed to influence the senators' views of the imperial admission, and it is worth remembering that emperors who consistently flouted senatorial expectations generally met a premature death. Indeed, Matthew Roller has highlighted how Julio-Claudian writers participated in constructing paradigms of rulership which significantly influenced the emperor.[73] Consequently, if Dio could convince his fellow senators that good emperors mainly included senators in the imperial admission and behaved like a *primus inter pares* in this ritual, it would put the emperor under considerable pressure to live up to these expectations. This would be no mean feat as the imperial admission constituted the most consistent and frequent form of interaction between the emperor and the elite, and petitions could be presented as part of this ritual.[74] Essentially, Dio's vision of the admission would provide the senators with consistent status manifestation and privileged access to the emperor, which would ensure increased power and influence for the senators relative to other groups.

72 Lindholmer 2021b, 17–62.

73 See especially Roller 2001, 213–287.

74 The possibility of presenting petitions at the admission has briefly been noted by, e.g., Millar 1977, 241; Saller 1982, 62; Winterling 1999, 134 but see now Lindholmer 2021b, 162–170.

On the other hand, Dio's emphasis on traditional comportment at the admission also offered the emperor an opportunity to derive significant legitimacy from this ritual, as long as he lived up to the senators' expectations. This underlines the fundamental interconnectedness of enactment and representation of ritual and illuminates how the two processes constantly configured and reconfigured the understanding of the ritual in question. This, in turn, emphasises the importance of exploring ritual both from an institutional angle and from a literary one.

It is important to note that this instrumental use of the admission by Dio does not undermine his trustworthiness as a source for this ritual. Dio's use of the admission does not show signs of wild fabrications; it instead seems that Dio deliberately included admissions of certain individuals when it suited his broader aims.[75] The fact that Dio invested the imperial admission with such unusual importance rather indicates that he is an especially good source since Dio consequently is highly sensitive to even minor changes in this ritual. Furthermore, the sophistication of Dio's use of the admission to portray different individuals supports the increasing appreciation of Dio's biographical efforts, which have traditionally commanded little respect.[76] This use of the admission to characterise different individuals is all the more sophisticated since it also provides insights into Dio's ideal government: Dio thought monarchy necessary, as the Republic was unworkable, and the fact that Dio only includes the admissions of (quasi-)emperors exemplifies this pragmatic acceptance of the realities of the monarchy. Moreover, I have argued elsewhere that Dio advocated a system of government in which the emperor ruled in deliberation with advisors, not the Senate as a whole, but still showed the senators respect and avoided stressing his monarchical superiority excessively.[77] Dio's presentation of the imperial admission as a senatorial ritual in which the emperor and the senators interacted as notional equals may be seen as part of this insistence on respect for the senators and on avoiding flagrant shows of imperial superiority.

Overall, Dio has communicated and supported certain interpretations through an intricate web of interconnected presentations of the admission throughout his work. This emphasises the importance of reading Dio's work in its entirety rather than extracting passages in isolation. Dio thus emerges

75 Dio uses annalistic material in a similarly selective and instrumental manner: Lindholmer 2021a.

76 Increasing appreciation: see, e.g., Mallan 2013; Scott 2017. Traditional view: see, e.g., Syme 1958, 273 on Tiberius or Millar 1964, 55 on Cicero.

77 Lindholmer 2020.

as a sophisticated and innovative historian who in new ways used the admission, both as a tool in his broader interpretations and as a way to influence the actual workings of this central imperial ritual.

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CHAPTER 9

Cassius Dio and the *Imitatio Alexandri*

Frances Pownall

In this article, I would like to shed light on two mysterious episodes that occur towards the end of Cassius Dio's *Roman History*. Both involve the figure of Alexander the Great, or more properly, imitations of the by-now larger-than-life figure of the Macedonian king. It has become somewhat of a truism in modern scholarship that historians writing during the Roman Empire employed the figure of Alexander the Great in problematizing and often very subtle ways to offer implicit (and therefore "safe") commentary on the imperial past and present.[1] Dio is no exception. Jesper Carlsen and Christopher Mallan have recently argued that Dio turns to Alexander as a way of commenting upon contemporary Roman politics, as well as the imperial past.[2] I propose to approach this question from a different angle, by examining Dio's narrative of two episodes involving imitations of Alexander. As I shall demonstrate, Dio's emphasis in these episodes upon playacting and charades exemplifies his desire to portray the rule of the later Severans as illegitimate and transgressive and also offers an implicit warning to the newly acceded Alexander Severus that *imitatio Alexandri* does not offer a suitable paradigm for imperial rule.[3]

The first episode, preserved like most of Dio's contemporary historical narrative only in a late epitome (in this case, the tenth-century *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis*),[4] occurs as Caracalla commences his eastern campaigns, crossing the Hellespont in 214 (Dio 78[77].16.7):

1 See esp. Spencer 2002; cf. Bosworth 2004; Bosworth 2007; Baynham 2009; Spencer 2009; Peltonen 2019. Bowden (2013) and Pownall (2018) offer concrete illustrations of how contemporary concerns of the Roman-era sources have contaminated the historical tradition on specific episodes from Alexander's reign.

2 Carlsen 2016; Mallan 2017b.

3 The tendency of Dio and other historians writing during the Severan period (in contrast to their Antonine predecessors) to comment upon contemporary history has been meticulously documented by Kemezis 2014; cf. Kemezis 2010 as well as Pistellato, Langford, Lindholmer, and Bertolazzi (in this volume). On Dio's critical view of his own era, see also Zecchini 2016 and Scott 2018a.

4 The *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis* (*EV*) are one of the surviving portions of the so-called *Excerpta Constantiniana*, which were allegedly compiled at the request of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus; on this corpus, see Roberto 2009; Treadgold 2013, 156–165; Mallan 2018;

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> Ὅτι ἐς τὴν Θρᾴκην ἀφίκετο ὁ Ἀντωνῖνος μηδὲν ἔτι τῆς Δακίας φροντίσας, καὶ τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον οὐκ ἀκινδύνως διαβαλὼν τόν τε Ἀχιλλέα καὶ ἐναγίσμασι καὶ περιδρομαῖς ἐνοπλίοις καὶ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἐτίμησε, καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἐκείνοις τε, ὡς καὶ μέγα τι κατωρθωκόσι καὶ τὸ Ἴλιον ὡς ἀληθῶς αὐτὸ τὸ ἀρχαῖον ᾑρηκόσι, χρήματα ἔδωκε, καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Ἀχιλλέα χαλκοῦν ἔστησεν.
>
> Antoninus [i.e. Caracalla] came into Thrace, paying no heed to Dacia. After crossing the Hellespont, not without danger, he honoured Achilles with sacrifices and with races in armour about his tomb, in which he as well as the soldiers took part; and in honour of this occasion he gave them money, just as if they had gained some great success and had in truth captured the very Troy of old, and he set up a bronze statue of Achilles himself.[5]

The crossing of the Hellespont evokes the Trojan War, a parallel to which Caracalla drew ostentatious attention, according to Dio, by offering sacrifices to Achilles and races run in his honour, as well as the erection of a statue to the hero.

The crossing of the Hellespont, of course, also evokes Alexander the Great's successful expedition against the east. As Christopher Mallan has observed in connection with this episode: "Dio … does not make the comparison with Alexander explicit. He did not need to."[6] First of all, Caracalla's alleged obsession with Alexander was famous.[7] It is not coincidental that in a slightly earlier context in Book 78(77) Dio enumerated a long series of examples of Caracalla's *imitatio Alexandri*, including his collection of Alexander memorabilia and his recreation of a Macedonian phalanx, complete with vintage armour, as well as his profession to the Senate that he himself was the reincarnation of Alexander (78[77].7–8). Secondly, it was almost certainly Caracalla himself who framed his crossing of the Hellespont in terms of the Alexander tradition. As Fergus Millar puts it:

Németh 2018. On the problems inherent in accessing Dio's narrative through the Byzantine-era excerptors, see Millar 1964, 1–4; Brunt 1980, 483–492; Potter 1999, 73–79.

5 All texts and translations (sometimes adapted) of Dio are taken from Cary's edition (volume 9 of Dio in the Loeb Classical Library, 1927 [based on Boissevain's edition]).

6 Mallan 2017b, 135.

7 On Caracalla's "Alexander-mania" as a deliberate component of his political self-representation, see Levick 1969 and the recent contributions of Langford 2017 and Imrie 2018, 99–112; but cf. Baharal 1994.

> It was also no doubt his desire to imitate Alexander which led Caracalla to cross over into Asia not by the normal route to Chalcedon but over the Hellespont. His accident during the crossing – his ship capsized and he had to be rescued by his *Praefectus classis* – is intelligible if, like Alexander, he had insisted on both steering the ship himself and making a sacrifice to Poseidon in midstream.[8]

As Millar's observation suggests, what Dio is actually describing in this episode is not so much the historical Alexander's arrival at Ilium, but rather the contemporary tradition of the event. Alexander's historical arrival at Ilium and the later tradition are decidedly not the same thing, as Waldemar Heckel has recently argued. In a re-examination of the extant renditions in the Roman-era sources of the ubiquitous portrayal of Alexander at Troy as an emulator of Achilles, Heckel urges caution in accepting these literary constructs by later writers as evidence for the historical Alexander.[9] He convincingly argues that the roots of the persistent tradition of Alexander's *Achillei imitatio* (as he terms it) lie in Hephaestion's premature death at Ecbatana in 324 BCE and Alexander's over-the-top reaction to it, which (along with his own premature death the following year) naturally evoked the story of Achilles and Patroclus. This parallel with Achilles was subsequently elaborated and retrojected by the (much) later sources into Alexander's earlier actions, including his arrival at Troy.[10]

A re-examination of the source tradition for Alexander's sacrifices to Achilles at Troy suggests that Heckel's interpretation is correct. Our earliest extant source is Diodorus Siculus (17.17.1–3):

> Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ μετὰ τῆς δυνάμεως πορευθεὶς ἐπὶ τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον διεβίβασε τὴν δύναμιν ἐκ τῆς Εὐρώπης εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν. αὐτὸς δὲ μακραῖς ναυσὶν ἑξήκοντα καταπλεύσας πρὸς τὴν Τρῳάδα χώραν πρῶτος τῶν Μακεδόνων ἀπὸ τῆς νεὼς ἠκόντισε μὲν τὸ δόρυ, πήξας δ᾽ εἰς τὴν γῆν καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπὸ τῆς νεὼς ἀφαλλόμενος

8 Millar 1964, 215. The details of Alexander's personal steering of the ship and the midstream sacrifice to Poseidon can be found in Arrian (*Anab*. 1.11.6), a passage that will be discussed below.

9 Heckel 2015. Cf. On the portrayal of Alexander as Achilles as a literary artifice, see also Carney 2000, 274–285; on Arrian's role in the development of this tradition, see Bowden 2018 and Liotsakis 2019, esp. 163–225.

10 Heckel 2015, 30 (cf. Bosworth 1980, 103–104): "In truth, it was the obvious parallel from the end of the king's life that caused later writers to retroject the Patroclus-Hephaestion parallel into the earlier period and to exploit the simple known fact of Alexander's connections with the Aeacidae."

> παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἀπεφαίνετο τὴν Ἀσίαν δέχεσθαι δορίκτητον. καὶ τοὺς μὲν τάφους τῶν ἡρώων Ἀχιλλέως τε καὶ Αἴαντος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐναγίσμασι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς πρὸς εὐδοξίαν ἀνήκουσιν ἐτίμησεν. αὐτὸς δὲ τὸν ἐξετασμὸν τῆς ἀκολουθούσης δυνάμεως ἀκριβῶς ἐποιήσατο.
>
> Alexander advanced with his army to the Hellespont and transported it from Europe to Asia. He personally sailed with sixty fighting ships to the Troad, where he flung his spear from the ship and fixed it in the ground, and then leapt ashore himself the first of the Macedonians, signifying that he received Asia from the gods as a spear-won prize. He visited the tombs of the heroes Achilles, Ajax, and the rest and honoured them with offerings and other appropriate marks of respect, and then proceeded to make an accurate count of his accompanying forces.[11]

Writing during the twilight years of the Roman Republic,[12] Diodorus appears to be drawing on Alexander's own professed panhellenic aim of revenge for the Persian invasions of the fifth century,[13] which the Greeks themselves interpreted as a continuation of the epic struggle between east and west that had begun with the Trojan War (as is made abundantly clear in the narrative of Herodotus *inter alios*).[14]

Not surprisingly, allusions to the Trojan War abound in Diodorus' narrative of Alexander's detour to Troy after his crossing of the Hellespont. The vivid image of Alexander leaping ashore from his ship first of the Macedonians is reminiscent of Homer's narrative of the death of Protesilaus, the first of the Achaeans to leap from his ship upon the arrival of the Greek fleet at Ilium, only to be slain forthwith by a Trojan archer (Hom. *Il.* 2.701–702). It is significant that Herodotus concludes his history with a digression on the Athenian crucifixion of the Persian Artayctes, whose plundering of the shrine to Protesilaus at Elaeus on the Chersonese serves as a climax to the conflicts between east

11 Text and translation of Diodorus are taken from C.B. Welles' edition (volume 8 of Diodorus in the Loeb Classical Library [1963]).

12 Although he is commonly described as an Augustan writer, the evidence suggests that Diodorus actually composed his *Bibliotheke* between 60 and 30 BCE; Green 2006. On Diodorus as a product of the intellectual world of the late Republic, see esp. Muntz 2017, 1–26 and Sacks 2018.

13 On the crucial role of the Persian Wars in the creation of Hellenic identity, see esp. Mitchell 2007 and Yates 2019. On Alexander's panhellenic aims, see Flower 2000; on Alexander's use of the revenge theme as a consensus strategy, see Squillace 2010.

14 On the reciprocal relationship between Homer and Herodotus, see Haubold 2007 (cf. the other articles in the same volume treating aspects of the cultural legacy of the Persian Wars).

and west that went all the way back to the Trojan War.[15] While the allusion to Protesilaus is implicit in Diodorus, the parallel with the Trojan War becomes explicit in his narrative of Alexander's offerings at the tombs of Achilles, Ajax, and the other heroes. Similarly, Diodorus (17.18.1) mentions in passing as Alexander departs from Troy a sacrifice to Athena, a staunch supporter of the Greek forces in Homer's *Iliad*. In spite of these resonances with the Trojan War in his narrative of Alexander's passage to Asia, it should be noted that Diodorus affords Achilles no special prominence. Alexander simply visits his tomb along with the others of the Trojan War heroes.

The history of Pompeius Trogus, originally written almost certainly during the reign of Augustus,[16] but preserved only in a later epitome by Justin,[17] provides an almost identical tradition. Like Diodorus, Trogus/Justin reads Alexander's arrival at Troy as a recreation of the Trojan War (Just. *Epit*. 11.5.10–12):

> *Cum delati in continentem essent, primus Alexander iaculum uelut in hostilem terram iecit armatusque de naui tripudianti similis prosiluit atque ita hostias caedit, precatus ne se regem illae terrae inuitae accipiant. In Ilio quoque ad tumulos eorum, qui Troiano bello ceciderant, parentauit.*
>
> On reaching the mainland Alexander first hurled his spear into the soil which was his enemy, and leapt fully armed from the ship like a man performing a dance. He then offered up sacrificial victims, praying that those lands be not unwilling to accept him as their king. He also conducted sacrifices at Troy, before the tombs of the heroes who had died in the Trojan War.[18]

Once again we find an indirect allusion to Protesilaus, which Trogus/Justin embroiders with a dramatic simile reinforcing the ritual aspects of Alexander's expedition against the Persians.[19] Another similarity with Diodorus' narrative

15 Hdt. 9.116–120 (cf. 7.33). On this passage, see the insightful commentary of Flower & Marincola 2002, 302–311.

16 Alonso-Núñez 1987; Yardley in Yardley & Heckel 1997, 1–8; Levene 2007, 287–289.

17 Justin's date is impossible to ascertain; his *floruit* is generally thought to have been sometime between the second and fourth centuries CE (Yardley in Yardley & Heckel 1997, 8–19).

18 All translations of Justin are taken from Yardley in Yardley & Heckel 1997.

19 Yardley translates *tripudianti similis* as "like a man performing a dance." The "dance" in Justin's epitome is the *tripudium*, "a ritual, three-step dance performed by the Roman priests known as the Salii" (Heckel, in Yardley & Heckel 1997, 110).

is the reference to Alexander's sacrifices in front of the tombs of the heroes who died in the Trojan War. It is worth noting that Justin's epitome does not even mention Achilles by name (of course, there is no way to tell if Trogus did so in his *Philippic History*). It seems clear, nevertheless, that Trogus has not modified the basic outline of Alexander's visit to Troy in the earlier tradition.

It is only with the writers of the Second Sophistic in the high Roman Empire that we find the episode reworked not just to echo the Trojan Wars but also to highlight the parallel between Alexander and Achilles. Unlike his predecessors, Plutarch provides no details about Alexander's crossing of the Hellespont, preferring to highlight his magnanimous distribution of resources, perhaps in keeping with his biographical aim of illustrating his subject's character (cf. Plut. *Alex*. 1). Instead, he simply states: "such was the ardour and such the equipment with which he crossed the Hellespont" (Plut. *Alex*. 15.3: τοιαύτῃ μὲν ὁρμῇ καὶ παρασκευῇ διανοίας τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον διεπέρασεν).[20] But after this brief comment, he proceeds to wax far more eloquent on Alexander's visit to Troy (Plut. *Alex*. 15.4–5):

> Ἀναβὰς δὲ εἰς Ἴλιον ἔθυσε τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ τοῖς ἥρωσιν ἔσπεισε. τὴν δὲ Ἀχιλλέως στήλην ἀλειψάμενος λίπα καὶ μετὰ τῶν ἑταίρων συναναδραμὼν γυμνός, ὥσπερ ἔθος ἐστίν, ἐστεφάνωσε, μακαρίσας αὐτὸν ὅτι καὶ ζῶν φίλου πιστοῦ καὶ τελευτήσας μεγάλου κήρυκος ἔτυχεν. ἐν δὲ τῷ περιϊέναι καὶ θεᾶσθαι τὰ κατὰ τὴν πόλιν ἐρομένου τινὸς αὐτὸν εἰ βούλεται τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου λύραν ἰδεῖν, ἐλάχιστα φροντίζειν ἐκείνης ἔφη, τὴν δ᾽ Ἀχιλλέως ζητεῖν, ᾗ τὰ κλέα καὶ τὰς πράξεις ὕμνει τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκεῖνος.
>
> Then, going up to Ilium, he sacrificed to Athena and poured libations to the heroes. Furthermore, after anointing himself with oil and running a race with his companions, naked, as is the custom, he crowned the gravestone of Achilles with garlands, pronouncing the hero happy in having, while he lived, a faithful friend, and after death, a great herald of his fame. As he was going about and viewing the sights of the city, someone asked him if he wished to see the lyre of Alexander [i.e., Paris]. "For that lyre," said Alexander, "I care very little; but I would gladly see that of Achilles, to which he used to sing the glorious deeds of brave men."[21]

20 Text and translation of Plutarch's *Alexander* are taken from Perrin's edition (volume 7 of Plutarch's *Lives* in the Loeb Classical Library [1919]).

21 I have modified Perrin's translation for, as Hamilton (1969, 38) observed, the middle ἀλειψάμενος indicates that Alexander anointed himself rather than the tomb of Achilles.

Although the re-enactment of Protesilaus' dramatic leap to shore does not appear, Plutarch does give a nod to the earlier tradition preserved in Diodorus and Trogus/Justin by mentioning Alexander's sacrifices to Athena and offering of libations to the heroes (i.e., of the Trojan War), whom like Justin he leaves unnamed.

Where Plutarch most differs from the previous tradition is his emphasis on Alexander's desire to emulate Achilles. In fact, he is the first of our extant sources to associate Alexander with Achilles in particular, as opposed to the heroes of the Trojan Wars in general. Furthermore, there are hints that Plutarch intends us to draw a connection between Alexander's close friendship with Hephaestion and Achilles' bond with Patroclus. The inclusion in this context of the detail that Alexander ran races with his companions seems odd unless it is meant to be understood as a recreation of the funeral games of Patroclus.[22] Similarly, the reference to Achilles' "loyal friend" (φίλου πιστοῦ) in Alexander's garlanding of his tomb at Troy surely must be read as an allusion to the hero's close friendship with Patroclus. For what it is worth, however, Plutarch leaves the link between Achilles/Alexander and Patroclus/Hephaestion implicit.

This link becomes explicit for the first time in Arrian, although it should be noted that he himself does not vouch for it. He carefully portrays the crossing of Alexander's army to Asia as a panhellenic war of revenge against the Persians for the fifth-century invasions of Greece. The detailed account of Alexander's march to the Hellespont through Thrace faithfully recreates in reverse the route taken by Xerxes in 480 (Arr., *Anab.* 1.11.3–5),[23] and Arrian (*Anab.* 1.11.6) specifies that Alexander's commander Parmenio transported the army from Sestus to Abydos, the very same place that Xerxes had crossed the Hellespont.[24] In these sections of his narrative emphasizing the panhellenic nature of Alexander's campaign, Arrian adopts the vengeance theme from Alexander's own legitimizing propaganda, almost certainly following his primary sources, Ptolemy and Aristobulus, both of whom wrote contemporary eyewitness accounts.[25]

Interestingly (in an attempt to reconcile a contradiction in the source tradition?), Arrian reports that Alexander crossed the Hellespont separately from the bulk of his army (who were transported by Parmenio, as we have seen).

22 Cf. Hom. *Il.* 23.

23 Bosworth 1980, 99.

24 Herodotus 7.33; cf. 9.114; in both contexts, notably, Herodotus connects Xerxes' invasion to Protesilaus and thereby represents the ultimate Greek victory over the Persians as revenge for the chain of conflicts between east and west that began with the Trojan War.

25 Arr. *Anab. praef.* 1–2. On Arrian's choice of sources, see Bosworth 1980, 16–34; Stadter 1980, 66–76; Leon 2021, 24–32.

Arrian testifies that after leading his army to Sestus, Alexander made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Protesilaus (Arr., *Anab.* 1.11.5):

> ἐλθὼν δὲ ἐς Ἐλαιοῦντα θύει Πρωτεσιλάῳ ἐπὶ τῷ τάφῳ τοῦ Πρωτεσιλάου, ὅτι καὶ Πρωτεσίλαος πρῶτος ἐδόκει ἐκβῆναι ἐς τὴν Ἀσίαν τῶν Ἑλλήνων τῶν ἅμα Ἀγαμέμνονι ἐς Ἴλιον στρατευσάντων. καὶ ὁ νοῦς τῆς θυσίας ἦν ἐπιτυχεστέραν οἱ γενέσθαι ἢ Πρωτεσιλάῳ τὴν ἀπόβασιν.
>
> Arriving at Elaeus, he sacrificed to Protesilaus at his tomb, since he was thought to be the first to disembark on Asian soil of the Greeks who fought with Agamemnon against Troy. The intention of the sacrifice was that his own landing on Asian soil might be luckier than that of Protesilaus.[26]

By including this detail of Alexander's apotropaic sacrifice to Protesilaus,[27] which does not appear in any of the other extant accounts, Arrian draws upon the tradition that Alexander's campaign was intended as retribution not just for the fifth-century Persian Wars, but as the climax to the ongoing conflict between east and west which had begun with the Trojan War.

These Homeric resonances continue and intensify in Arrian's account of Alexander's crossing to Asia (Arr. *Anab.* 1.11.6–7):

> Ἀλέξανδρον δὲ ἐξ Ἐλαιοῦντος ἐς τὸν Ἀχαιῶν λιμένα κατᾶραι ὁ πλείων λόγος κατέχει, καὶ αὐτόν τε κυβερνῶντα τὴν στρατηγίδα ναῦν διαβάλλειν καὶ, ἐπειδὴ κατὰ μέσον τὸν πόρον τοῦ Ἑλλησπόντου ἐγένετο, σφάξαντα ταῦρον τῷ Ποσειδῶνι καὶ Νηρηίσι σπένδειν ἐκ χρυσῆς φιάλης ἐς τὸν πόντον. λέγουσι δὲ καὶ πρῶτον ἐκ τῆς νεὼς σὺν τοῖς ὅπλοις ἐκβῆναι αὐτὸν ἐς τὴν γῆν τὴν Ἀσίαν.
>
> According to the prevalent story Alexander made from Elaeus for the Achaean harbour and steered the admiral's ship himself when he crossed, sacrificing a bull to Poseidon and the Nereids in the midst of the Hellespont strait, and pouring into the sea a drink offering from a golden bowl. They also say that he was the first to disembark on Asian soil in full armour.

According to Arrian, although he does not vouch for it himself, instead of recreating Xerxes' route over the Hellespont along with his army, Alexander himself

26 Text and translation of this and other quotations from Arrian, with some modifications, are taken from Brunt's edition (volume 1 of Arrian's *Anabasis* in the Loeb Classical Library [1976]).

27 Cf. Bosworth 1980, 100–101.

crossed from the tomb of Protesilaus at Elaeus to the so-called Achaean harbour near the ancient city of Troy.[28] Arrian's distancing of himself from this account of Alexander's unusual route ("the prevalent story") suggests that he is not following his usual sources, Ptolemy and Aristobulus, who (as we have seen) played up Alexander's professed panhellenic aim of vengeance upon the Persians for the fifth-century invasions. Instead, in this passage, Arrian selects a starting point and a landing point for Alexander's crossing of the Hellespont that are of significance in the tradition of the Trojan Wars rather than Xerxes' expedition.

These deliberate Homeric echoes persist in Arrian's reference to the tradition that Alexander re-enacted Protesilaus' leap to shore, from which he distances himself once again ("they also say"). The allusion to Protesilaus suggests that Arrian is following the same source tradition on Alexander's crossing of the Hellespont as Diodorus and Trogus/Justin.[29] Still following the same source tradition, as his continued use of indirect discourse demonstrates, Arrian proceeds to state that Alexander built an altar on either side of the Hellespont where he had crossed, which he dedicated to Zeus Apobaterios, Athena, and Heracles. Then he went up to Troy, sacrificed to Athena Ilias, dedicated a panoply of his own armour in the temple, and took down in exchange some of the sacred weapons preserved from the Trojan War, which his shield-bearers subsequently carried into battle before him (Arr. *Anab*. 1.11.7–8); Arrian distances himself once again from this final clause, with its explicit Trojan War reference, with another "they say" (λέγουσιν). Zeus and Heracles were the ancestors of the Argead dynasty, and Zeus was honoured with this particular epithet to commemorate the safe landing of Alexander and his army; sacrifices to both deities ensued throughout his campaign as a matter of course. As we have seen, sacrifices to Athena figure prominently in both Diodorus' and Plutarch's narratives of Alexander's arrival in Asia. Athena was a usefully polyvalent figure for, in addition to her own role in the Trojan War tradition, Alexander himself also seems to have ostentatiously sacrificed to Athena whenever possible as

28 On the location of the Achaean harbour, see Bosworth 1980, 101.

29 This is the so-called "vulgate tradition," a useful if somewhat problematic term applied to what appears to be a body of highly romanticized and sensationalized material on Alexander shared by Diodorus, Trogus/Justin, Curtius, and (to some extent) Plutarch, much of which may go back to a common source, Cleitarchus of Alexandria; on the complex nature of this tradition, see Bosworth 1988, 8–13. Cleitarchus has traditionally been considered to be a contemporary of Alexander, but a recently published papyrus fragment (*POxy*. 4808) identifies him as the tutor of Ptolemy IV, which suggests that his *floruit* may be as late as the middle of the third century, although this new "low" dating has not been universally accepted; see, e.g., Prandi 2012 and Lane Fox 2019.

part of his panhellenic mission of revenge against Persia for the fifth-century invasions, in which Xerxes' troops had sacked and destroyed the temple of Athena in Athens.[30] That said, however, Arrian's sources continue to privilege the Trojan War resonances of Alexander's expedition over the revenge theme.

The final detail in Arrian's narrative of Alexander's landing in Asia, which once more he attributes to a different tradition from his usual sources (λόγος κατέχει: "so the story goes"), is Alexander's sacrifice to Priam at the altar of Zeus Herkeios (i.e., at the spot where Priam was murdered by Neoptolemus according to the literary tradition),[31] in an attempt to appease the wrath (μῆνιν: an allusion to the famous first word of Homer's *Iliad*?) of Priam against the family of Neoptolemus, to which he himself belonged (Arr. *Anab*. 1.11.8). The tradition of Alexander's descent from Achilles through his mother Olympias was certainly current in the fourth century (cf. Theopomp. *FGrH* 115 F 355), but may have been later elaborated by this particular source tradition to enhance the portrayal of Alexander's expedition as a re-enactment of the Trojan Wars, for Alexander himself seems to have emphasized instead his paternal descent from Zeus and Heracles.[32]

Arrian now proceeds to recount Alexander's arrival at Troy (*Anab*. 1.12.1):

> Ἀνιόντα δ' αὐτὸν ἐς Ἴλιον Μενοίτιός τε ὁ κυβερνήτης χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ ἐστεφάνωσε καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ Χάρης ὁ Ἀθηναῖος ἐκ Σιγείου ἐλθὼν καί τινες καὶ ἄλλοι, οἱ μὲν Ἕλληνες, οἱ δὲ ἐπιχώριοι· … οἱ δὲ, ὅτι καὶ τὸν Ἀχιλλέως ἄρα τάφον ἐστεφάνωσεν· Ἡφαιστίωνα δὲ λέγουσιν ὅτι τοῦ Πατρόκλου τὸν τάφον ἐστεφάνωσε· καὶ εὐδαιμόνισεν ἄρα, ὡς λόγος, Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀχιλλέα, ὅτι Ὁμήρου κήρυκος ἐς τὴν ἔπειτα μνήμην ἔτυχε.
>
> When Alexander reached Troy, Menoetius the pilot crowned him with a golden wreath and then Chares the Athenian arrived from Sigeum with others, Greeks or natives of the place … Others [say] that Alexander placed a wreath on the tomb of Achilles, and Hephaestion is said to have placed one on Patroclus' tomb; and Alexander, so the story goes, blessed Achilles for having Homer to proclaim his fame to posterity.

30 Bosworth 1980, 102; cf. Arr. *Anab*. 1.16.7.

31 Bosworth 1980, 102.

32 The Argead foundation legend goes back to Alexander I (cf. Hdt. 5.22 with 8.137–139 and 9.45.2); on the tenacity of this Heraclid lineage in the self-representation of later Argead kings (including Alexander the Great), see Moloney 2015. On Alexander's emphasis on his descent from Heracles and Zeus in his official policy, see Heckel 2015, esp. 25–30.

This section appears to contain a lacuna between Arrian's account of Alexander's arrival at Troy and the dramatic account of his role-playing at Achilles' tomb, for there is no οἱ μέν to balance the οἱ δέ clause, and no verb to introduce the ὅτι clause.[33] Arrian's three signals indicating indirect discourse in one sentence suggest very strongly that he is turning once again to the alternate source tradition, in which the romanticized overlay of the Trojan War overshadows Alexander's own emphasis on the panhellenic theme of vengeance for the Persian Wars, as can be discerned from the contemporary accounts of Ptolemy and Aristobulus. The content of the lacuna may well have been the tradition found in Diodorus, Trogus/Justin, and Plutarch that Alexander visited the tombs of the heroes of the Trojan War ("Achilles, Ajax, and the rest," as Diodorus says), and honoured them with offerings.[34] More importantly perhaps, Arrian (or more properly his source) has added a new element to the tradition of Alexander garlanding the tomb of Achilles found in Plutarch: Hephaestion's simultaneous garlanding of the tomb of Patroclus. This new element, which makes the Alexander/Achilles and Hephaestion/Patroclus parallel explicit for the first time, is certainly suspect as a literary artifice that was later retrojected into the source tradition.[35]

Nevertheless, for what it is worth, the Alexander/Achilles and Hephaestion/Patroclus link had become firmly entrenched by the second century, as can be seen in this passage from Dio's contemporary Aelian (*VH* 12.7):

> Ὅτι Ἀλέξανδρος τὸν Ἀχιλλέως τάφον ἐστεφάνωσε καὶ Ἡφαιστίων τὸν τοῦ Πατρόκλου, αἰνιττόμενος ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν ἐρώμενος τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου, ὥσπερ Ἀχιλλέως ὁ Πάτροκλος.
>
> Note that Alexander laid a wreath on Achilles' tomb and Hephaestion on Patroclus', hinting that he was the object of Alexander's love, as Patroclus was of Achilles'.[36]

Like Arrian, Aelian is aware of a tradition that Alexander and Hephaestion placed wreaths on the tombs of Achilles and Patroclus at Troy. Aelian, however, goes beyond Arrian in making the erotic aspect of their relationship explicit.

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33 Bosworth 1980, 103.

34 So Bosworth 1980, 103.

35 So Bosworth 1980, 103–104 and Heckel 2015.

36 Text and translation of Aelian are taken from Wilson's edition (Aelian's *Historical Miscellany* in the Loeb Classical Library, 1997).

The erotic element of the tradition was certainly well known by Dio's time, for his slightly later contemporary Herodian states that after Caracalla crossed the Hellespont to begin his eastern campaign, he paid a visit to Troy (*VH* 4.8.4):

> ἦκεν ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀχιλλέως τάφον, στεφάνοις τε κοσμήσας καὶ ἄνθεσι πολυτελῶς, πάλιν Ἀχιλλέα ἐμιμεῖτο.
>
> He came to the tomb of Achilles, which he decorated lavishly with garlands and flowers, and once again imitated Achilles.[37]

Like Dio, Herodian does not make the association with Alexander explicit, but his narrative of Caracalla laying wreaths on the tomb is a clear reference to the tradition of Alexander emulating Achilles. Furthermore, Herodian expands the erotic element of the Alexander/Achilles parallel, with the addition of the bizarre anecdote of Caracalla's baroque funeral for one of his personal favourites, a freedman called Festus, who conveniently died (or as hostile sources claimed was expressly killed for this purpose) at Troy, in order to provide a Patroclus/Hephaestion substitute to be mourned in a suitable fashion by the emperor in his role as Achilles/Alexander (Hdn. 4.8.4–5). Notably, this whole episode occurs in a larger context of playacting,[38] with Caracalla subsequently performing the role of Alexander in Alexandria, a masquerade which turned into a bloody massacre when his intended "audience" responded with mockery instead of acclaim (Hdn. 4.8.6–4.9.8).

Although the Patroclus/Hephaestion parallel and the erotic nature of the relationship between Alexander and Hephaestion had become key elements of the tradition of Alexander at Troy by Dio's time (possibly in response to Caracalla's own attempt to manipulate the memory of his illustrious predecessor), they are conspicuous by their absence from the surviving excerpt of his history.[39] In fact, the basic elements of Dio's narrative are the same

37 The text of Herodian is from C.M. Lucarini's 2005 Teubner, and the (modified) translation is taken from C.R. Whittaker's edition (volume 1 of Herodian in the Loeb Classical Library [1969]). Whittaker (416, n. 2) suggests that πάλιν be excised, on the grounds that Caracalla has not imitated Achilles previously in Herodian's narrative (the word is missing in the citation of this passage in the *Suda s.v.* Ἀντωνῖνος). But the "again" could be referring to Alexander's famous (supposed) imitation of Achilles (cf. Lucarini's citation of Càssola's translation of πάλιν as "secondo il solito sistema"). Alternatively, Herodian himself may have confused Alexander with Achilles as the object of Caracalla's imitation. I thank Adam Kemezis for this suggestion.

38 Cf. Kemezis 2014, 250.

39 For what it is worth, the aetiological interests of the compilers of the *EV* (see, e.g., Mallan 2018, 91) suggest that nothing significant has been omitted from the excerpt of the Troy episode.

as Plutarch's version of Alexander's arrival in Troy, with Caracalla imitating Alexander by sacrificing to Achilles and running races with his soldiers in his honour. Nowhere is there any explicit mention of Patroclus, although his presence can perhaps be perceived implicitly if we understand the races by the tomb as representing funeral games. What is unique, however, is Dio's comment on the hollowness of this whole masquerade, in keeping with his overall portrayal of Caracalla as merely playacting as a soldier (78[77] 16.7):[40]

> καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἐκείνοις τε, ὡς καὶ μέγα τι κατωρθωκόσι καὶ τὸ Ἴλιον ὡς ἀληθῶς αὐτὸ τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἠρηκόσι, χρήματα ἔδωκε, καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Ἀχιλλέα χαλκοῦν ἔστησεν.
>
> In honour of this occasion, he gave them money, just as if they had gained some great success and had in truth captured the very Troy of old, and he set up a bronze statue of Achilles himself.

Furthermore, as has been noted,[41] Dio portrays Caracalla as deliberately imitating Alexander's own imitation of Achilles. What has not been observed before (to my knowledge) is that in Dio's version (unlike Herodian's), Caracalla is portrayed so as to imitate Plutarch's Alexander, and not the Alexander of Arrian. I will return to this point later, but it is worth noting that after his narration of Alexander and Hephaestion jointly placing wreaths on the tombs of Achilles and Patroclus, Arrian immediately segues into a lament that, unlike Achilles, Alexander had no Homer to preserve his fame for posterity, and then launches into what is usually considered a second prologue to his work, claiming that he is worthy to make Alexander's deeds known to the world in the same way that Homer did for Achilles (Arrian 1.12.2–5).[42]

The whole scenario of Alexander-imitation, playacting, and masquerades recurs in a parallel episode towards the end of Dio's history, just after his narrative of Elagabalus' adoption in 221 of his younger cousin, at which point the emperor changed the youth's name to none other than Alexander (Dio 80[79].17.3).[43] Dio, once again preserved only in a late epitome (the

40 On Dio's criticism of Caracalla's "military-historical fantasies," see Kemezis 2014, 33.

41 Millar 1964, 215; Zeitlin 2001, esp. 239–40; Gleason 2011, esp. 62–65; Mallan 2017b, esp. 135–136.

42 On Arrian's so-called second preface, see Moles 1985; Marincola 1989; Gray 1990. Burliga (2015) has recently argued that it is intended as polemic against Plutarch, especially his *Life of Alexander*.

43 On the sources for Elagabalus' adoption of Alexander, see Scott 2018b (with thanks for allowing me to see an advance copy of his very useful commentary); see also Icks 2012, 37–38. On the significance of the name choice, which is surely intended to evoke

eleventh-century Byzantine historian Xiphilinus),[44] draws explicit links at both the beginning and the end of his narrative between this strange episode and Elagabalus' adoption of the future Alexander Severus (80[79].18.1–3); by doing so, as we shall see, he confirms the suggestion that a divine hand lay behind the accession of his eventual successor:

> ὀλίγον γὰρ τούτων πρότερον δαίμων τις Ἀλέξανδρός τε ὁ Μακεδὼν ἐκεῖνος εἶναι λέγων καὶ τὸ εἶδος αὐτοῦ τήν τε σκευὴν ἅπασαν φέρων, ὡρμήθη τε ἐκ τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἴστρον χωρίων, οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ὅπως ἐκείνῃ ἐκφανείς, καὶ διά τε τῆς Μυσίας καὶ τῆς Θρᾴκης διεξῆλθε βακχεύων μετ᾽ ἀνδρῶν τετρακοσίων, θύρσους τε καὶ νεβρίδας ἐνεσκευασμένων, κακὸν οὐδὲν δρώντων. ὡμολόγητο δὲ παρὰ πάντων τῶν ἐν τῇ Θρᾴκῃ τότε γενομένων ὅτι καὶ καταγωγαὶ καὶ τὰ ἐπιτήδεια αὐτῷ πάντα δημοσίᾳ παρεσκευάσθη· καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐτόλμησεν οὔτ᾽ ἀντειπεῖν οἱ οὔτ᾽ ἀντᾶραι, οὐκ ἄρχων, οὐ στρατιώτης, οὐκ ἐπίτροπος, οὐχ οἱ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἡγούμενοι, ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ ἐν πομπῇ τινὶ μεθ᾽ ἡμέραν ἐκ προρρήσεως ἐκομίσθη μέχρι τοῦ Βυζαντίου. ἐντεῦθεν γὰρ ἐξαναχθεὶς προσέσχε μὲν τῇ Χαλκηδονίᾳ γῇ, ἐκεῖ δὲ δὴ νυκτὸς ἱερά τινα ποιήσας καὶ ἵππον ξύλινον καταχώσας ἀφανὴς ἐγένετο. ταῦτα μὲν ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ ἔτι, ὡς εἶπον, ὤν, πρὶν καὶ ὁτιοῦν περὶ τὸν Βασσιανὸν ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ γενέσθαι, ἔμαθον.
>
> For shortly before this time a spirit, claiming to be the famous Alexander of Macedon, and resembling him in looks and general appearance, set out from the regions along the Ister, after first appearing there in some manner or other, and proceeded through Moesia and Thrace, revelling in company with four hundred male attendants, who were equipped with thyrsi and fawn skins and did no harm. It was admitted by all those who were in Thrace at the time that lodgings and all provisions for the spirit were donated at public expense, and none – whether magistrate, soldier, procurator, or the governors of the provinces – dared to oppose the spirit either by word or by deed, but it proceeded in broad daylight, as if in a solemn procession, as far as Byzantium, as it had foretold. Then taking ship, it landed in the territory of Chalcedon, and there, after performing some sacred rites by night and burying a wooden horse, it vanished. These facts I ascertained while still in Asia, as I have stated, and before anything had been done at all about Bassianus [i.e., Alexander Severus] at Rome.

Elagabalus' adoptive father Caracalla at least as much as the Macedonian king, see Rösger 1988 along with Kemezis 2016, esp. 377–378.

44 On Xiphilinus' epitome, see the recent studies of Mallan 2013 and Berbessou-Broustet 2016.

This episode is very mysterious and its meaning is obscure. Fergus Millar is almost certainly correct, however, in his observation that we should recognize the Alexander-*daimon*'s journey in 221 as a re-enactment of Caracalla's journey some seven years previously. As Millar comments, like Caracalla the Alexander-*daimon* imitated the appearance, clothing, and possibly even the Dionysian associations of Alexander.[45] Unlike Caracalla, however, who followed Alexander's original route and crossed the Hellespont, he took a more prosaic route from Byzantium to Chalcedon, where he carried out the same ostentatious ceremonies as his predecessor. As Millar concludes,[46] "the pseudo-Alexander was in reality, so to speak, a pseudo-pseudo-Alexander. He was imitating Caracalla imitating Alexander." Building on Millar's observation, I would suggest that the Alexander-*daimon* does not just recreate Caracalla's imitation of Alexander (itself an imitation of Alexander's imitation of Achilles), but actually subverts it, in what was almost certainly an elaborate performance staged by the royal faction who supported the accession of the future Alexander Severus.[47] First, the Alexander-*daimon* crosses from Europe to Asia in the wrong spot and therefore does not perform the ceremonies in the correct location, which suggests a parody of Caracalla's ostentatiously public spectacle rather than an imitation *tout court*.[48] Second, the apparently gratuitous and somewhat surprising detail of the burying of a wooden horse is surely a reference not just to "the most striking element in the story of the Trojan War," as Millar claims,[49] but is intended rather to serve as a metaphorical symbol of a false promise and deceptive gift, again undercutting Caracalla's attempt to draw an explicit link with the Alexander/Achilles continuum. What is more, the horse is a liminal animal in Greek mythology that can pass between the Olympian and chthonic realms,[50] which suggests that the ritual ceremonies performed by the Alexander-*daimon* should be understood as a clandestine chthonic reversal of those of Caracalla.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the narrative context of the Alexander-*daimon* episode in Dio is Elagabalus' adoption of his young cousin, which set in motion a series of events that ultimately led to his own assassination and Alexander Severus' accession the following year. Immediately following his narration of the adoption and Alexander's assumption of his loaded name, Dio comments (80[79].17.3):

45 Millar 1964, 215.
46 Millar 1964, 215.
47 Müller 2019, esp. 109–112 and Bertolazzi in this volume.
48 My thanks to Adam Kemezis for focusing my thoughts in this direction.
49 Millar 1964, 215.
50 So Steiner 1986, 109.

> καὶ ἔγωγε πείθομαι ἐκ θείας τινὸς παρασκευῆς ὡς ἀληθῶς αὐτὰ γεγονέναι, τεκμαιρόμενος οὐχ οἷς ἐκεῖνος εἶπεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἔκ τε τοῦ λεχθέντος αὐτῷ ὑπό τινος, ὅτι ἄρα τις Ἀλέξανδρος ἐξ Ἐμέσης ἐλθὼν αὐτὸν διαδέξεται, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ συμβεβηκότος ἔν τε τῇ Μυσίᾳ τῇ ἄνω καὶ τῇ Θράκῃ.
>
> And I, for my part, am persuaded that all this did come about in very truth by some divine arrangement; though I infer this, not from what he said, but from the statement made to him by someone else, to the effect that an Alexander should come from Emesa to succeed him, and again from what happened in Upper Moesia and in Thrace.

Dio's first-person comment that "some divine arrangement" (ἐκ θείας τινὸς παρασκευῆς) was at work behind the scenes suggests that he interprets the curious appearance and disappearance of the Alexander-*daimon* as an omen connected with the accession of Alexander Severus to the throne.[51] The statement made to Elagabalus that he would be succeeded by an Alexander from Emesa firmly connects this omen to Alexander Severus himself, whose family came from Emesa in Syria. In this way, the episode of the Alexander-*daimon* is designed not only to look backwards to Caracalla, as the reference to the events in Upper Moesia and Thrace (i.e., the *daimon*'s retracing of the steps of Caracalla) indicates but also to foreshadow Severus' eventual accession to the throne.[52] In other words, Dio skillfully weaves together the past and the future as admonitions for the present in his own contemporary political *milieu*.

If we are supposed to read Alexander Severus as well as Caracalla behind Dio's narrative of the Alexander-*daimon*, then what does Dio wish to tell us about him? Taken together, the bestowing of the name Alexander upon Severus when he was adopted by Elagabalus (who was alleged to be Caracalla's son) and the subsequent elimination of his adoptive father with the proclamation that the new ruler was the actual son of Caracalla,[53] whose infatuation with

51 Bertolazzi (in this volume) suggests that the appearance of *daimones* in Dio is connected with the imminent downfall of powerful individuals, foreshadowing, for example, the overthrow of the praetorian prefect Cleander (78[79].13.3), the assassination of Caracalla (79[78].7.4–5), and the defeat and death of Macrinus (79[78].37.4; cf. 79[78].38.4). On the role of *daimones* in Dio's narrative, see also Puiggali 1984. For the larger context of supernatural signs and political events in Dio, see Stewart in this volume.

52 So Bering-Staschewski 1981, 110–111 and Zecchini 1988. The allusion to the Trojan horse may also be intended to draw a link to Aeneas and mythical Roman history, as part of Alexander Severus' self-presentation as the new Augustus; Müller 2019, 115; cf. Rowan 2012, 235.

53 On the claim that Elagabalus was the illegitimate son of Caracalla, see Icks 2012, 10–12; for an exhaustive review of the evidence, see Arrizabalaga y Prado 2010, esp. 183–229.

Alexander the Great was notorious (as we have seen), suggest that Severus' advisers appealed to the cultural legacy of Alexander once again. This ploy allowed them to distance Alexander Severus from his unpopular predecessor by stressing the latter's illegitimacy and simultaneously to ground the claim that the young man was a legitimate heir to the Severan dynasty by forging a direct connection to Caracalla. The assumption of the imperial title Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander is significant because it linked Alexander Severus to the Antonine family (although, significantly, without the name Antoninus, which had become associated with Elagabalus) and the founder of the dynasty,[54] as well as to Alexander the Great (both in his own right as the successful conqueror of a vast empire and as a symbol of the claim to dynastic legitimacy through Caracalla).[55] By associating the accession of Alexander Severus with the Alexander-*daimon*'s parody of Caracalla's imitation of Alexander imitating Achilles, Dio raises the question of the imperial legitimacy of the dynasty as a whole, as well as the young emperor's place within it.

Dio's unmasking of dynastic fictions and imperial pretensions serves to connect the episode of the Alexander-*daimon* with the earlier episode of Alexander-imitation by Caracalla.[56] There, as we have seen, with his emphasis on playacting and masquerade, Dio underlines that Caracalla's attempt to emulate Alexander emulating Achilles is nothing more than sleight of hand, suggesting that his claims to legitimacy through dynastic fictions and military prowess are equally illusory. This kind of false legitimation went back to the first generation of the Severan dynasty, with Septimius Severus' posthumous adoption into the Antonine family as a son of Marcus Aurelius, and his bestowing of the title of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus upon his eldest son, the future emperor Caracalla. Dio cynically comments in this context that the senators were dismayed by Severus' self-presentation as the son of Marcus Aurelius and his conferral of divine honours upon Commodus (his newly-acquired brother), whom he had just recently been abusing (76[75].7.4).[57] Furthermore, Dio also hints that Septimius Severus' own attempt to emulate the military achievements of Alexander the Great is just as much a charade as Caracalla's by repurposing the famous anecdote of Alexander's refusal to drink a helmet

54 On the failure of the *nomen Antoninorum* as a legitimizing tool, see Pistellato in this volume.

55 On the significance of Alexander Severus' imperial title, see Arrizabalaga y Prado 2010, 274.

56 And perhaps also with Commodus' self-presentation as Hercules; see Osgood 2016, 186–187.

57 On Dio's disapproval of the self-presentation of Severus as a member of the Antonine family, see Rantala 2016; cf. Madsen 2016b.

full of water despite the scorching heat because there was not enough for the whole army.[58] But there is a twist in the tail in Dio's version. Instead of emptying the helmet onto the ground, as Alexander the Great did, Severus drank the water in the full view of his parched troops (Dio 75[75].2–3). Thus, Severus patently falls short of the standards of exemplary military leadership exhibited by Alexander and stands revealed as merely playacting.[59]

If Septimius Severus is not a true Antonine or a true Alexander, then by definition neither is his son and successor Caracalla, despite his use of the imperial title Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and his deliberate and exaggerated *imitatio Alexandri*. Nevertheless, for Dio, Caracalla was the eldest son of Septimius Severus, and on that basis at least had a claim to the throne. It is probably for this reason that Dio calls him Antoninus throughout his narrative of his reign, and refers to him as Bassianus (his original name) or other derogatory nicknames only after his death.[60] Elagabalus, on the other hand, whose path to the throne came through an uprising, had even less right to use the title of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Dio underlines Elagabalus' utter lack of legitimacy by implying that he is merely playacting as Caracalla's son. He records an incident in Julia Maesa's revolt against Macrinus in which the young Elagabalus was paraded around an army camp stationed near his hometown in Syria dressed in clothing that Caracalla had worn as a child; his uncanny likeness to Caracalla resulted in the soldiers' addressing him as Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (that is, the official imperial name that he adopted after his accession).[61] The early busts and coins of Elagabalus play up not only his physical resemblance to Caracalla but also his military haircut, suggesting that he was attempting to tap into his predecessor's dynastic legitimacy and military reputation.[62] Dio refuses to use his imperial title and consistently refers to Elagabalus as Pseudo-Antoninus throughout his history, thereby exposing the falsity of his dynastic fictions and military pretensions.[63] It is perhaps for similar reasons that (unlike Herodian) Dio reserves the name of Bassianus (i.e., Caracalla's original name before he adopted the imperial title) for Alexander Severus.[64]

58 This anecdote, an ostentatious display of Alexander's sharing of the hardship of his men, clearly became a *topos* in the Alexander historians, occurring at the juncture that best suited the narrative needs of any given source. Cf. Plut. *Alex.* 42.7–10; Arr. *Anab.* 6.26.1; Curt. 7.5.10–12; Frontin. *Str*. 1.7.7; Polyaen. *Strat*. 4.3.25.

59 So Mallan 2017b, 136 (with 131–133). See also Allen in this volume.

60 Dio 79(78).9.3; cf. Gleason 2011, 66; Osgood 2016, 180; Scott 2018b, 33.

61 Dio 79(78).31.3, 32.2; cf. Osgood 2016, 181.

62 Icks 2012, 63.

63 Cf. Osgood 2016, 181: "In calling Elagabalus 'pseudo-Antoninus,' Dio reminds his readers of the blatant fiction that was the foundation myth of the whole reign."

64 Cf. Scott 2018b, 84–85.

The episode of the Alexander-*daimon* with its explicit reference to Alexander the Great and allusion to Caracalla's Alexander-imitation, which as we have seen was intended to be read in conjunction with Alexander Severus' accession to the throne, highlights the new emperor's adoption into a dynasty unmasked as illegitimate right from the start, whose claims to military achievement stand revealed as mere charades. But Dio's melding of past and present in this episode suggests that his aim is not just to critique the regimes of Alexander Severus' immediate predecessors, but is minatory as well. Alexander Severus (or perhaps more properly his advisers) attempted to channel the authority of the memory of Alexander the Great not only to establish dynastic legitimacy but also to position him as a capable military commander, particularly against the Sasanians, who (not coincidentally) boasted that they were the true heirs to the Achaemenid Persian empire.[65] Dio offers a warning to the young ruler that, unlike his predecessors, his claims to military prowess need to be based on merit, rather than playacting.[66] Furthermore, it is worth noting in this connection that for Dio, the extension of the Roman empire to the east under the Severans represented a weakening of imperial power and a danger to the stability of the state.[67] Thus, Dio re-deploys the figure of Alexander the Great, whose newly-conquered empire disintegrated almost immediately after his death, to urge the new emperor to exercise caution in adopting wholesale the dominant imperial ideology of his immediate predecessors.[68]

Finally, it is important to note that in both episodes of Alexander-imitation in Dio's Severan narrative, even Alexander the Great himself is portrayed as an imitator, in his emulation of Achilles. Dio underlines Alexander's imitative role in both episodes: In the Caracalla episode, he deliberately fails to name him and refers only to Achilles, whereas in the Alexander-*daimon* episode the jarring allusion to the wooden horse brings the Trojan War parallel to the forefront once again. By implying that Alexander the Great himself is playacting, in the same way as Caracalla (as parodied by the Alexander-*daimon*), Dio casts doubt on the legitimacy of Alexander's own rule. Another parallel between Alexander the Great and the later Severan emperors is Alexander's

65 On Alexander Severus' claims to military prowess, see Rowan 2012, 219–245.

66 Cf. Ando 2016, who argues that Dio assesses the legitimacy of the Antonine and Severan emperors in terms of their conduct in office, rather than the circumstances of their accession.

67 So Bertrand 2016a and 2016b.

68 Similarly, Plutarch's Alexander may represent, at least in part, a warning to Trajan to reconsider his own eastern campaigns; so Koulakiotis 2017, 242. Such warnings may go all the way back to Herodotus; see, e.g., Fornara 1971; Stadter 1992; Moles 2002 (for a nuanced and updated take on this question, see Grethlein 2018).

self-proclaimed double paternity, Philip II and Zeus,[69] in the wake of his assumption of divine sonship (as announced by the oracle of Zeus/Ammon at Siwah).[70] Furthermore, by Dio's time, Alexander's alleged claims to divinity were considered axiomatic in the discourse on autocratic rule, although the issue of his deification has been clouded in the Roman-era sources by contemporary debates.[71] Dio's own opinion on the bestowing of divine honours upon the emperor can be discerned from his cynical comments on the deifications of Commodus (Dio 76[75].7) and Caracalla (79[78].9.2).[72] These parallels suggest that for Dio Alexander the Great is just as illegitimate as the previous Severan rulers, and he offers a subtle warning that despite his undeniable military success Alexander should not function as an appropriate model for imperial rule.

Dio's problematization of Alexander the Great is interesting, for he does not follow the usual trend of Greek writers in the first and second centuries of idealizing the glory of their Hellenic past, of which Alexander naturally often represented the pinnacle. In fact, Dio's use of Alexander the Great as a negative *exemplum* and the hint that his power should be viewed as illegitimate is more reminiscent of the portrayal of Alexander as a tyrant in Latin historiography.[73] Perhaps Dio's view of Alexander the Great as a problematic figure is an example of his willingness to interpret history from a Roman perspective, that is, as further evidence of his "cultural hybridism" straddling Greek and Roman *paideia*.[74] Furthermore, it is likely that Dio's "Roman" Alexander is intended to be read in deliberate opposition to the much more idealizing portrayal of Alexander as a symbol of Hellenic greatness in Arrian.[75] As we have seen, Dio is self-consciously playing with the tradition of Alexander's imitation of

69 I thank Adam Kemezis for this suggestion.

70 On what can be deduced to be Alexander's own claims, which were circulated by his court historian Callisthenes, see Pownall 2013.

71 See the scholarship on the "Roman Alexander" cited above in n. 1.

72 Dio's attitude towards the worship of living emperors also comes up in the debate between Agrippa and Maecenas, where Dio advocates a return to the traditional ruler cult (going back to Augustus) as opposed to the aberrant excesses of recent rulers; see Fishwick 1990 and Madsen 2016a, esp. 295–297. It is precisely as part of his portrayal of Augustus as a model emperor that Dio (falsely) claims (51.20.8) that there has been no worship of the living emperor in Rome or Italy; Lange 2015–16.

73 For a useful contrast between the tradition on Alexander in the Greek imperial writers versus the Latin ones, see Asirvatham 2010, 111–116; see also Carlsen 2016.

74 I have borrowed this term to describe the world view of Dio, a Greek senator writing an annalistic history of Rome in Greek, from Sulochana Asirvatham (2017, 485–486); see also Carlsen 2016, 331, and Asirvatham in this volume.

75 Cf. Müller (2018), who argues that Lucian also deconstructs the idealized Alexander found in Second Sophistic writers, particularly Arrian. Nevertheless, it should perhaps be noted that Arrian's Alexander is hardly monolithic either; see, e.g., Bosworth 2007.

Achilles and seems to reject the version highlighting the Alexander/Achilles and Hephaestion/Patroclus parallel, first found in Arrian and elaborated by Dio's contemporaries Aelian and Herodian. Through his more complicated and decidedly unidealized portrayal of Alexander, does Dio subliminally set his own history in opposition to Arrian's *Anabasis*?[76] As we have seen, immediately after Arrian narrates his version of the tradition of Alexander's imitation of Achilles at Troy, he immediately segues into a justification of himself as a worthy recorder of Alexander's deeds, just as Homer was for Achilles. I wonder if we are meant to contrast Arrian's motivation for writing his history of Alexander, which could easily be conceived as hubristic, with the divine inspiration through a dream omen (τὸ δαιμόνιον) in connection with the accession of Septimius Severus which Dio claims prompted him to compose his history (73[72].23.1–5).[77] I conclude this offering with a final question for further consideration: Is Dio's Alexander meant to represent a subtle intertextual allusion to Arrian,[78] through which he suggests that the idealized Alexander of Greek writers of the Second Sophistic should no longer be considered a suitable *exemplum* for imperial Roman rule?

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76 On Arrian's construction of Alexander in the *Anabasis* as a sustained response to contemporary philosophical debates on the nature of imperial power, see Burliga 2013. So too Arrian's *Parthica* is generally thought to have been inspired by contemporary concerns, namely the eastern campaigns of Trajan; see e.g., Mallan 2017a, 376.

77 On this passage, see Scott 2018b, 10–14.

78 Dio mentions Arrian explicitly once, in a reference to his campaign against the Alans when he was the governor of Cappadocia (69.15.1). The *Suda* (*s.v.* Δίων = *FGrH* 1075 T 1) claims that Dio wrote a biography of Arrian. Nothing of this biography is extant, and it is generally thought to be a misattribution by the *Suda*, based on the reference in Dio; see Millar 1964, 70; but cf. Wirth 1963 (who argues that it was a work of Dio's youth) and Radicke 1999 (who inclines to Dio's authorship but concedes that the list of works attributed to Dio in the *Suda* entry is "a complete mess.")

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CHAPTER 10

Cassius Dio, Julia Maesa and the Omens Foretelling the Rise of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander

Riccardo Bertolazzi

It is well known that in his *Roman History* Cassius Dio gave considerable space to divine portents. These often disclose the destiny of future emperors,[1] but, in some cases, it is the emperors who make use of predictions to legitimate their actions.[2] As regards this latter group, two prophecies of the god Elagabal seem particularly worth investigating, for they foretell two crucial moments in the reign of the emperor Elagabalus, namely his rise to power in 218 and his decision, in 221, to adopt his cousin Severus Alexander and to bestow the title of Caesar upon him.[3] Dio's narration of Elagabal's two prophecies may be traced to a specific origin since they were both particularly useful in concealing the machinations of Elagabalus' grandmother Julia Maesa, whose role as emperor-maker is not as evident in Dio's account as it is in his contemporary, Herodian.[4] Starting from the examination of the contexts in which the

1 The most famous case is that of Septimius Severus, whose future as emperor was disclosed by a series of dreams and omens which Dio collected in a booklet at the beginning of Severus' reign (73[72].23.1 [Xiph.] and 75[74].3.1–3 [Xiph.]). On this topic, see the analysis by Weiss 2012, 391–395. In Dio's *Roman History*, series of omens also foretold the accessions of Nero (61.2.1 [Xiph.]), Galba (63[64].1 [Xiph.]), Vespasian (65[66].9.1 [Xiph.]) and Trajan (67.12.1 [Xiph.]). I would like to thank Adam Kemezis, Colin Bailey, Beatrice Poletti, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper. They are of course not responsible for the views expressed here.

2 On the day of his assassination, Caesar hesitated to leave his house because of bad omens (44.18.1); in accordance with an oracle or dream, Augustus would, on one day of the year, disguise himself as a beggar following some oracle or dream (54.35.3); Claudius put to death the governor of Spain, Appius Silanus, because of a dream that Narcissus had had (60.14.4); during the civil war of 193–194, Pescennius Niger abandoned his march on Perinthus after observing unfavourable omens (75[74].6.3 [Xiph.]); after dreaming that Clodius Albinus was still alive and plotting against him, Severus believed to the false report that Plautianus was planning his murder (77[76].3.4 [Xiph.]).

3 On the reign of Elagabalus in general, significant recent works include the monographs by Arrizabalaga y Prado 2010 and Icks 2012. On the literary traditions in particular, see Sommer 2004; Kemezis 2016; Osgood 2016; Corsi Silva 2019; Rantala 2020 with further bibliography.

4 For an overview of the agency of Maesa during Elagabalus' reign, see the detailed analyses by Greco 2012 and Conesa Navarro 2019, as well as the discussions in Nadolny 2016 and McHugh 2017.

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prophecies of the god Elagabal took place, I will examine why Dio decided to give them particular prominence in his *Roman History* and conversely to leave Maesa's actions in obscurity. I will first analyse the historical circumstances that led Elagabalus to occupy the imperial throne. Luckily, Dio's original narration of the events occurring between the end of the reign of Caracalla and the beginning of Elagabalus' rule is preserved, though with a few lacunae, in the *Codex Vaticanus Graecus* 1288. This allows us to recover useful details otherwise omitted in the epitome of Joannes Xiphilinus, our principal source for reconstructing the contents of Dio's books covering the Severan age.[5] Subsequently, by following what is reported in the epitome for the later stages of Elagabalus' reign, I will compare the circumstances surrounding that emperor's accession to what happened when he decided to adopt his cousin, as it seems to me that significant analogies can be drawn between these two events.

1 The Young Avitus Bassianus Becomes Emperor

After the assassination of Caracalla on April 6, 217, the new emperor, Macrinus, was left with the task of concluding the Parthian war which Caracalla had started two years earlier. Dio reports that, after having fought a battle the outcome of which proved highly uncertain, Macrinus abandoned the war because of his innate cowardice and a widespread lack of discipline in his army (79[78].27.1). It was precisely this latter element which in the end caused his fall from power and murder, for eventually the soldiers revolted and set up a new emperor (Elagabalus), whose incompetence and mediocrity inevitably resulted in significant damage to the state (79[78].29.2).[6] Before narrating how the revolt against Macrinus took place, however, Dio lingers over a series of prodigies foreshadowing new (negative) epochal events, prodigies which provoked considerable alarm among the senators (79[78].30.1):

> Καί μοι δοκεῖ ἐναργέστατα καὶ τοῦτο, εἴπερ τι ἄλλο τῶν πώποτε, προδειχθῆναι: ἡλίου τε γὰρ ἔκλειψις περιφανεστάτη ὑπὸ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκείνας ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ κομήτης ἐπὶ πλεῖον ὤφθη, ἕτερόν τέ τι ἄστρον ἀπὸ δυσμῶν πρὸς ἀνατολὰς τὸ ἀκροφύσιον ἐπὶ πολλὰς νύκτας ἀνατεῖνον δεινῶς ἡμᾶς ἐξετάραττεν,

5 On Xiphilinus and his technique as an epitomist of Dio, see Mallan 2013 and Berbessou-Broustet 2016.

6 On Macrinus' lack of legitimation and difficulties in dealing with the soldiers, see the recent analysis by Bérenger 2017, 146–152. On Dio's depiction of Elagabalus as an incompetent ruler, see the discussion in Kemezis 2016.

> ὥστε τοῦτο δὴ τὸ τοῦ Ὁμήρου διὰ στόματος ἀεὶ ποιεῖσθαι: ἀμφὶ δ' ἐσάλπιγξεν μέγας οὐρανός, ἄϊε δὲ Ζεύς.
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> It seems to me that this also had been indicated in advance as clearly as any event that ever happened. For a very distinct eclipse of the sun occurred just before that time and the comet was seen for a considerable period; also, another star, whose tail extended from the west to the east for several nights, caused us terrible alarm so that this verse of Homer was ever on our lips: "rang the vast welkin with clarion calls, and Zeus heard the tumult."[7]

The gloomy atmosphere created in this passage effectively introduces the reader to the succeeding events, which revolve around the city of Emesa, where Julia Domna's sister and Caracalla's aunt, Julia Maesa, had been forced to retire after leaving the imperial court with her two daughters, Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea (79[78].30.2–3). Here, so Dio tells us, a freedman of Maesa, Eutychianus, was persuaded by some unspecified omens and a prophecy of the god Elagabal to take Julia Soaemias' son, the young Varius Avitus Bassianus (the future emperor Elagabalus), to the camp of the *legio III Gallica*, which was stationed not far from the city (79[78].31.2–4).[8] The soldiers, who had been looking for a pretext to revolt against Macrinus, enthusiastically believed Eutychianus' story that the boy was the illegitimate son of Caracalla, and proclaimed him as emperor (same passage).[9] In these lines, Dio also stresses that Eutychianus could count on the help of some other freedmen, soldiers and councillors of Emesa, but neither Maesa nor Soaemias were aware of what was happening (μήτε τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ [i.e., Ἀουίτου] μήτε τῆς τήθης ἐπισταμένης). Herodian provides a lengthy narrative of these events in his *History of the Roman Empire after Marcus*, but his account differs from Dio's in several

7 Transl. by Earnest Cary. I will henceforth use Cary's English edition of Dio's *Roman History* (Loeb Classical Library, 1914–1927) when providing translations taken from Dio's account.

8 A lacuna in the *Codex Vaticanus* has obliterated the reference to the status of Eutychianus. Xiphilinus' epitome (344.22–28), however, reports that he was an imperial freedman. Eutychianus and an individual nicknamed Gannys, a freedman of Maesa who according to Dio became both mentor of the emperor Elagabalus and lover of Julia Soaemias, are probably one and the same (on this topic, see Scott 2018, 86–87 with further references). Although Dio does not mention the *legio III Gallica* explicitly, Herodian (5.3.9) talks about a military unit stationed near Emesa, a probable allusion to the camp of Raphaneae, where the *III Gallica* was stationed.

9 On the importance which was placed on Bassianus' alleged parentage to justify his accession, see Bérenger 2017, 152–157.

important ways.[10] First, no reference is made to negative omens or, most importantly, to Eutychianus and the prophecy of Elagabal as factors that set the conspiracy in motion. Secondly, Herodian shows no hesitation in identifying Julia Maesa as the mastermind of the whole plan to bring the Syrian branch of the Severan dynasty back to power (5.3.10–12):

> [ἡ Μαῖσα], εἴτε πλασαμένη εἴτε καὶ ἀληθεύουσα, ἐξεῖπεν ὅτι ἄρα Ἀντωνίνου υἱός ἐστι φύσει, τῇ δὲ ὑπολήψει ἄλλου δοκοίη, ἐπιφοιτῆσαι γὰρ αὐτὸν ταῖς θυγατράσιν αὐτῆς νέαις τε οὔσαις καὶ ὡραίαις, καθ' ὃν καιρὸν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις σὺν τῇ ἀδελφῇ διέτιβεν. ὅπερ ἐκεῖνοι ἀκούσαντες, τοῖς συστρατιώταις κατ' ὀλίγον ἀπαγγέλλοντες διαβόητον ἐποίησαν τὴν φήμην, ὡς ἐς πᾶν χωρῆσαι τὸ στρατιωτικόν. τῇ δὲ Μαίσῃ ἐλέγετο σωροὺς εἶναι χρημάτων, ἐκείνην δὲ ἑτοίμως πάντα προέσθαι τοῖς στρατιώταις, εἰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ γένει ἀνανεώσαιντο. ὡς δὲ συνέθεντο, νύκτωρ εἰ κατέλθοιεν λαθόντες, ἀνοίξειν τὰς πύλας καὶ δέξεσθαι πᾶν τὸ γένος ἔνδον βασιλέα τε καὶ υἱὸν ἀποδείξειν Ἀντωνίνου, ἐπέδωκεν ἑαυτὴν ἡ πρεσβῦτις, ἑλομένη πάντα κίνδυνον ἀναρρῖψαι μᾶλλον ἢ ἰδιωτεύειν καὶ δοκεῖν ἀπερρῖφθαι. νύκτωρ τε λάθρᾳ τῆς πόλεως ὑπεξῆλθε σὺν ταῖς θυγατράσι καὶ τοῖς ἐγγόνοις. καταγαγόντων τε αὐτοὺς τῶν προσφυγόντων στρατιωτῶν γενόμενοι πρὸς τῷ τείχει τοῦ στρατοπέδου ῥᾷστα ὑπεδέχθησαν.
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> Maesa, either inventing the story or telling the truth, informed [the soldiers] that Bassianus was really the son of Antoninus [i.e., Caracalla], although it might appear that he had another father. She claimed that when she was living in the palace with her sister, Antoninus slept with both of her daughters, who were young and beautiful. The men repeated her story to their fellow soldiers, and it soon became common knowledge throughout the army. Maesa was rumoured to be enormously wealthy, and it was reported that she would immediately give all her money to the soldiers if they restored the empire to her family. The soldiers agreed that if the family would come secretly to the camp at night, they would open

10 The usefulness of Herodian's work has often been questioned in past decades, especially because of his probable reliance on Dio as principal source until the reign of Elagabalus (Alföldy 1971a, 1971b, 1972; Kolb 1972, esp. 47, 160–161; Scheithauer 1990; Zimmermann 1999, 45–46, 81–85) and his efforts to confer a dramatic tone to the events he narrated (Alföldy 1971a, 368; 1971b, 433; 1972, 31–32). Conversely, other scholars have credited Herodian with the use of multiple sources and recognised considerable elements of originality in his work (Piper 1975; Bowersock 1975; Gascó 1984; Šašel-Kos 1986, 286–292; Sidebottom 1998; Hidber 2006; Galimberti 2014, 18–22), which does not seem to show particular signs of discontinuity at the beginning of the reign of Severus Alexander (i.e., when Dio terminates his account).

> the gates, receive the family inside, and proclaim Bassianus emperor and son of Antoninus. The old woman agreed to the plan, preferring to risk any danger rather than live in obscurity and appear to have been discarded. And so, she slipped unnoticed out of the city at night with her daughters and grandsons. Guided by soldiers who had deserted, they came to the wall of the camp and were warmly received inside.[11]

It is difficult to understand from which sources Dio and Herodian obtained their information. One cannot say anything for certain about Herodian, who never cites his sources and remains a figure quite obscure to us.[12] On the other hand, I think that a reconstruction might be attempted in the case of Dio. We know, in fact, that Dio was in Asia Minor when the events mentioned above took place, for Macrinus had appointed him to supervise the administration of the cities of Pergamum and Smyrna (80[79].7.4).[13] Soon after Avitus Bassianus

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11 Translation by Echols 1961.

12 The only information about his career is his statement that he held an unspecified position in the imperial government (1.2.5). On his biography, see Zimmermann 1999, 302–319; Hidber 2006, 1–16; Sidebottom 2007, 79–80. Maesa's plans to put Elagabalus on the throne and, later, to replace him with Severus Alexander have been ascribed to the fantasy of Herodian, eager to create a family drama (Kettenhofen 1979, 23–28, 33–37 and now Kemezis 2016). Indeed, the pathos-filled speech which he puts in the mouth of Maesa's sister Julia Domna when, after the death of Severus, she tried to dissuade her sons Caracalla and Geta from partitioning the empire between the two of them (4.3.8–9), might be taken as one of the best examples of Herodian's taste for emotional events (though other dramatic situations narrated by Dio, whom Herodian almost certainly knew, do not appear in his account: see, for instance, Domna's death in 79[78].23.1–3). The details are undoubtedly invented, but I think it is significant that in this very period Domna was awarded the unprecedented, quasi-imperatorial titles of *mater senatus et patriae* and the names *Pia* and *Felix* (Bertolazzi 2019, 477), which are telling of the prominent position she acquired after Severus' death (on this point, cf. also Bertolazzi 2021, 454). It has also been noted that Herodian's hints at the protocols that regulated the life at the imperial palace might be revealing of a certain familiarity with people who used to frequent the imperial court (Cecconi 2010, 131–132). There is consequently room to say that Herodian was influenced by contemporary dynastic events, which he might have observed from a privileged point of view.

13 Τὸ δὲ δὴ κατὰ τὸν στόλον αὐτὸς ἐγγύθεν ἐκ τῆς Περγάμου ἀκριβώσας ἔγραψα, ἧς, ὥσπερ καὶ τῆς Σμύρνης ταχθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ Μακρίνου ἐπεστάτησα ("I personally learned what happened with the fleet by accurate investigation in Pergamum, close at hand, when I was in charge of that city, as well as of Smyrna, having been appointed by Macrinus"). Against the traditional view of Dio as λογιστής (*curator*) of these two cities, Guerber 2004 suggests that he should rather be identified as a διορθωτής (*corrector*), i.e., as an officer whose powers were not limited to the financial supervision (as it is the case with the λογιστής), but also included the preservation of the public order. The uproar occurred in Pergamum following Macrinus' decision to withdraw some privileges granted by Caracalla (Dio 79[78]20.4)

was proclaimed emperor, our historian reports that a propaganda war broke out between Macrinus and the young pretender to the throne. Both parties sent letters "to the provinces and the legions" (79[78].34.6) containing, as one might readily suppose, different versions of the facts. There are good reasons to believe that these messages reached a very large audience, for Dio says that their contradictory accounts caused significant turmoil throughout the empire (79[78].34.6–8).[14] It seems therefore probable that Dio is reporting details taken from these letters, which he certainly knew on account of his position as an imperial official in Asia. Macrinus clearly had no interest in denying the involvement of both Maesa and Soaemias in the plot, since from 79(78).38.1 we know that, at this time, the Senate had declared them public enemies along with Avitus Bassianus. Dio's statement that neither Maesa nor Soaemias were aware of the initiative of Eutychianus might thus be interpreted as a piece of information taken from the letters from Maesa's camp, which shrouded her role and credited the ultimate authorship of the coup to the god Elagabal.

I think that several reasons might lie behind the concealment of Maesa. Firstly, she was presumably aware of the fact that making an excessive display of influence might adversely affect the image of an imperial woman: Several jokes about Julia Domna's alleged incest with Caracalla had circulated a few years earlier, notably after the latter had allowed his mother to bear the unprecedented names *Pia* and *Felix* along with the (also unprecedented) titles of *mater senatus et patriae*[15]; Domna's excessive desire for power had also been criticized, to such a degree that, after her death, Dio compared her to the mythical Near Eastern queens Semiramis and Nitocris.[16] Secondly, Domna's failure

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may justify, in Guerber's view, the decision of sending a διορθωτής. *Contra* Letta 2019, 167–168, noting that Dio uses the word ἐπιστάτης (which derives from the verb ἐπιστατέω used in the passage mentioned above) to refer to the office of *curator* in 59.15.4 and 69.14.4.

14 On this propaganda war, cf. Rubin 1980, 9–13.

15 On Domna's unprecedented names and titles, see Bertolazzi 2019, 477. Domna's alleged affair with her son is reported by the *Historia Augusta* (*Carac.* 10.1–4), whereas Herodian says that the Alexandrians nicknamed her Jocasta (4.9.3). On this topic, see Davenport 2017. After Elagabalus' accession, Maesa was proclaimed Augusta and "grandmother of the Augustus" (*avia Augusti*). However, she did not assume the other titles which had belonged to her sister (Kienast, Eck and Heil 2017, 169).

16 79[78].23.3: ὅπως αὐταρχήσῃ τῇ τε Σεμιράμιδι καὶ τῇ Νιτώκριδι, ἅτε καὶ ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν τρόπον τινὰ χωρίων αὐταῖς οὖσα ("for she hoped to become sole ruler and make herself the equal of Semiramis and Nitocris, inasmuch as she came in a sense from the same parts as they"). Dio's judgement of Domna in this passage is consistent with other parts of his work where he stigmatises the excessive power accumulated by Domna. In fact, while blaming Caracalla for his viciousness (78[77].10.2), Dio adds that "he possessed the craftiness of his mother" (εἶχε καὶ το πανοῦργον τῆς μητρὸς). He also shows some resentment towards Caracalla's decision to allow Domna to manage his correspondence and to hold

to stir up a military revolt against Macrinus after the assassination of Caracalla might have had something to do with the lack of skillful mediators between her and the army. Dio's account of this event (79[78].23.1–6) is riddled with lacunae, though one can understand that Domna tried to form a conspiracy with the soldiers who had been assigned to her escort (23.2–3: ἔπραττέν τι καὶ ἐς τοὺς συνόντας οἱ στρατιώτας). What happened next is impossible for us to say, but clearly her plans to persuade the soldiers to revolt did not work. Having drawn lessons from these events, Maesa likely put every effort into finding collaborators who could deal with the army, attributing, at the same time, her rise to prominence to the decisions of others. Thus, on the one hand, she had the young Avitus (now the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus but henceforth referred to by his famous nickname Elagabalus) downplay her involvement in the letters sent to "the legions and the provinces" and, on the other, she got Eutychianus to lead the mutinous troops against Macrinus while also being a sort of pedagogue to the young emperor.[17] Finally, as regards the god Elagabal, it may be noted that crediting him with the authorship of the plan had the advantage of winning over the numerous soldiers who, according to Herodian, would often attend the ceremonies in honour of the Sun god performed in the temple of Emesa (5.3.8–9).[18]

That said, a question remains: Why did Dio decide to report the version advertised by the propaganda of Elagabalus' court without making any reference to what might have happened in the shadows behind him? Herodian's version demonstrates that it was not too difficult for his contemporaries to identify Maesa as the mastermind behind the coup: The emperor was only fourteen years old and not known for his initiative; he was "an empty-headed young

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public *salutationes* in the same fashion as the emperor did (78[77].18.4). Finally, when he dedicates an obituary to the Augusta (79[78]24.1–4), he describes her as a power-hungry person. On the interpretation of all these passages, see Bertolazzi 2015; Scott 2017 and now Bertolazzi 2021, 454–455, as well as Langford and Tate in this volume; on Domna's *salutationes* in particular, see Lindholmer in this volume. The fact that it was impossible for Domna to rule alone has been stressed by Levick 2007, 106.

17 Similar considerations are expressed by Letta 1991, 683–684. Letters to legions and provinces: Cass. Dio 79(78).34.6; Eutychianus (referred to as Gannys, see n. 8 above) leading the troops: 79(78).38.3; as Elagabalus' mentor: 80(79).6.1. Scholars who have recently examined these events also tend to identify Maesa as the mastermind of the coup against Macrinus, and Eutychianus as an emissary of her. Cf. Greco 2012; McHugh 2017, 45–47; Scott 2018, 89.

18 The Emesene solar cult must have been greatly popular among the legionaries of the *III Gallica* since at least the previous century. Tacitus affirms that, during the Battle of Bedriacum, the soldiers of this unit hailed the rising sun, a custom which they had acquired in Syria (*Hist.* 3.24).

idiot" (κοῦφον καὶ ἄφρονα νεανίαν) according to Herodian (5.7.1). Moreover, Eutychianus was connected to Maesa by a relationship of patronage. We also know that, between the end of June and mid-July 218 (i.e., one or two months after Elagabalus' accession on May 16), the Arval Brethren in Rome included Maesa as Augusta and *avia Augusti* in the prayer which they uttered on the occasion of the co-optation of the young emperor into their priestly college.[19] It follows that Maesa was almost immediately given an official position in the new regime. This fact is particularly worthy of note if we think that Soaemias, who, after all, had allegedly slept with Caracalla and already held a public role during the Secular Games of 204, was evidently recognised as Augusta and *mater Augusti* only later.[20] These details could hardly have escaped the attention of Dio, who observes that, in a letter to the Senate and the People, Elagabalus immediately styled himself as Caesar and emperor (and Maesa as Augusta?) without a formal vote by the Senate (80[79].2.2).

A possible explanation for Dio's hesitation to include Maesa in the picture might be found in his narrative techniques. Our historian seems, in fact, more interested in attributing the rise of an incompetent leader like Elagabalus to the chaotic situation which characterised the reign of Macrinus, whose mediocrity made him incapable of checking the lack of discipline in the army.[21] What is more, the new emperor had been brought to power by a person of humble lineage and expertise, Eutychianus, "who had given people pleasure in amusements and gymnastic exercises" (79[78].31.1: Εὐτυχιανός τις ἔν τε ἀθύρμασι καὶ ἐν γυμνασίοις ἀρέσας).[22] As Dio stresses a little later, the fact that many mediocre people of humble birth had successfully managed to subvert the government of the empire had the inevitable result of encouraging many other individuals of low status and without any special merits to stir up

19 *CIL* VI 2104 = 32388 = Scheid 1998, 297 no. 100 l. 21.

20 In the *acta* of the Secular Games, Soaemias is mentioned as the first matron among the 18 wives of *equites* attending the games (Pighi 1965, V[a] 27); the more consistent group of 109 wives of senators was led by her aunt Julia Domna. Cf. Rantala 2017, 96.

21 On Dio's treatment of Macrinus, see Allen in this volume.

22 Interestingly, Eutychianus is referred to as the sole author of the coup in another passage narrating his murder at the hands of Elagabalus (80[79].6.1): [Γάννυ]ν δὲ δὴ τὸν τὴν ἐπανάστασιν κατασκευάσαντα, τὸν ἐς τὸ στρατόπεδον αὐτὸν ἐσαγαγόντα, τὸν τοὺς στρατιώτας προσαποστήσαντα, τὸν τὴν νίκην αὐτῷ τὴν κατὰ τοῦ Μακρίνου παρασχόντα, τὸν τροφέα, τὸν προστάτην, ἐν ἀρχῇ εὐθὺς τῆς ἡγεμονίας ἐν τῇ Νικομηδείᾳ ἀποκτείνας ἀνοσιώτατος ἀνδρῶν ἐνομίσθη ("Because of his slaying at Nicomedia at the very outset of his reign Gannys, the man who had brought about the uprising, who had taken him to the camp, who had also caused the soldiers to revolt, who had given him the victory over Macrinus, and who had been his foster father and guardian, he was regarded as the most impious of men").

revolts in the army and in the fleets with the purpose of gaining the supreme power (80[79].7.3). The negative prodigies mentioned above unequivocally confirmed, in Dio's eyes, the chaotic times which were about to come.[23] From Dio's point of view, it was consequently much more convenient to attribute the rise of Elagabalus to a mediocre character like Eutychianus rather than to Julia Maesa, an imperial woman who had lived at court throughout the reigns of Severus and Caracalla.[24]

I believe that this narrative pattern combining military anarchy, weak emperors, negative omens, and alleged prophecies of Elagabal can be found further on in Dio's account, once again concealing the actions of Maesa as emperor-maker, this time on the occasion of Elagabalus' decision to bestow the purple on his cousin Gessius Bassianus Alexianus.

2 The Adoption of Severus Alexander

In the late spring of 221, Julia Mamaea's son, Bassianus Alexianus, was adopted by Elagabalus and elevated to the rank of Caesar with the name of Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander. Although the reasons behind this decision are not explained in Dio's account surviving through Xiphilinus' epitome, it is stated that the unconventional behaviour of Elagabalus had caused a rapid decrease in his popularity not only among the senators but also among the praetorians, who finally killed him in their camp (80[79].17.1 [Xiph.]).[25] The chain of events which led to such a tragic outcome started, as Dio puts it (80[79].17.2–18.3 [Xiph.]), with the ceremony of adoption in the Senate, which had been duly preceded by a number of omens and predictions:

23 On Dio's interpretation of astrological phenomena in relation to the history of Rome, see Stewart in this volume.

24 On this point, cf. Scott 2018, 89, who briefly notes that Dio might have overemphasised the roles played by mediocre people around Elagabalus, thus shifting the attention from the machinations of Maesa. Both Dio (79[78].30.3) and Herodian (5.3.2) stressed her stay at the imperial court during the reigns of Septimius Severus and Caracalla. It is also worth noting that Maesa already enjoyed a certain prestige well before becoming Augusta under Elagabalus, as seen in the city of Palmyra's honouring her with a statue when her sister Julia Domna was still alive (*IGLS* XVII/1, 157: Ἰουλίαν Μαῖσαν, Ἰουλίας Σεβαστῆς ἀδελφήν ["To Julia Maesa, sister of Julia Augusta"]).

25 On Elagabalus' unpopularity among senators and soldiers, see Sánchez Sánchez 2018, especially 54–58. According to the author, so far as our sources tell us, the eccentricities of this emperor did not cause a wave of indignation among the populace of Rome.

τὸν Βασσιανὸν τὸν ἀνεψιὸν αὐτοῦ ἐς τὸ συνέδριον ἐσαγαγών, καὶ τὴν Μαῖσαν καὶ τὴν Σοαιμίδα ἑκατέρωθεν παραστησάμενος, παῖδα ἔθετο [...]. καὶ γὰρ [ἔφησεν] τὸν Ἐλεγάβαλον τοῦτό τέ οἱ ποιῆσαι καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον αὐτὸν προσονομάσαι κεκελευκέναι. καὶ ἔγωγε πείθομαι ἐκ θείας τινὸς παρασκευῆς ὡς ἀληθῶς αὐτὰ γεγονέναι, τεκμαιρόμενος οὐχ οἷς ἐκεῖνος εἶπεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἔκ τε τοῦ λεχθέντος αὐτῷ ὑπό τινος, ὅτι ἄρα τις Ἀλέξανδρος ἐξ Ἐμέσης ἐλθὼν αὐτὸν διαδέξεται, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ συμβεβηκότος ἔν τε τῇ Μυσίᾳ τῇ ἄνω καὶ τῇ Θρᾴκῃ. ὀλίγον γὰρ τούτων πρότερον δαίμων τις Ἀλέξανδρός τε ὁ Μακεδὼν ἐκεῖνος εἶναι λέγων καὶ τὸ εἶδος αὐτοῦ τήν τε σκευὴν ἅπασαν φέρων, ὡρμήθη τε ἐκ τῶν περὶ τὸν Ἴστρον χωρίων, οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ὅπως ἐκείνῃ ἐκφανείς, καὶ διά τε τῆς Μυσίας καὶ τῆς Θρᾴκης διεξῆλθε βακχεύων μετ᾽ ἀνδρῶν τετρακοσίων, θύρσους τε καὶ νεβρίδας ἐνεσκευασμένων, κακὸν οὐδὲν δρώντων. ὡμολόγητο δὲ παρὰ πάντων τῶν ἐν τῇ Θρᾴκῃ τότε γενομένων ὅτι καὶ καταγωγαὶ καὶ τὰ ἐπιτήδεια αὐτῷ πάντα δημοσίᾳ παρεσκευάσθη: καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐτόλμησεν οὔτ᾽ ἀντειπεῖν οἱ οὔτ᾽ ἀντᾶραι, οὐκ ἄρχων, οὐ στρατιώτης, οὐκ ἐπίτροπος, οὐχ οἱ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἡγούμενοι, ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ ἐν πομπῇ τινὶ μεθ᾽ ἡμέραν ἐκ προρρήσεως ἐκομίσθη μέχρι τοῦ Βυζαντίου. ἐντεῦθεν γὰρ ἐξαναχθεὶς προσέσχε μὲν τῇ Χαλκηδονίᾳ γῇ, ἐκεῖ δὲ δὴ νυκτὸς ἱερά τινα ποιήσας καὶ ἵππον ξύλινον καταχώσας ἀφανὴς ἐγένετο. ταῦτα μὲν ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ ἔτι, ὡς εἶπον, ὤν, πρὶν καὶ ὁτιοῦν περὶ τὸν Βασσιανὸν ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ γενέσθαι, ἔμαθον.

He brought his cousin Bassianus before the senate and having caused Maesa and Soaemis to take their places on either side of him, formally adopted him as his son [...]. [He said] that Elagabal had ordered him to do this and further to call his son's name Alexander. And I, for my part, am persuaded that all this did come about in very truth by some divine arrangement; though I infer this, not from what he said, but from the statement made to him by someone else, to the effect that an Alexander should come from Emesa to succeed him, and again from what happened in Upper Moesia and in Thrace. For shortly before this time a spirit, claiming to be the famous Alexander of Macedon, and resembling him in looks and general appearance, set out from the regions along the Ister, after first appearing there in some manner or other, and proceeded through Moesia and Thrace, revelling in company with four hundred male attendants, who were equipped with thyrsi and fawn skins and did no harm. It was admitted by all those who were in Thrace at the time that lodgings and all provisions for the spirit were donated at public expense, and none – whether magistrate, soldier, procurator, or the governors of the provinces – dared to oppose the spirit either by word or deed, but it proceeded in broad daylight, as if in a solemn procession, as far as

> Byzantium, as it had foretold. Then taking ship, it landed in the territory of Chalcedon, and there, after performing some sacred rites by night and burying a wooden horse, it vanished. These facts I ascertained while still in Asia, as I have stated, and before anything had been done at all about Bassianus at Rome.

As in the case of Elagabalus' rise to power, the version of these events provided by Herodian significantly differs from Dio's, for neither the prophecy of Elagabal nor the appearance of the spirit of Alexander the Great is mentioned. According to Herodian, it was once again Maesa who took the initiative. Elagabalus' grandmother was, in fact, worried about the excesses of her grandson, whose popularity among the soldiers was decreasing alarmingly (5.7.1). Fearing that she would once again be reduced to a private station if Elagabalus were killed, she persuaded him to adopt his cousin and to promote him to the rank of Caesar in order to improve the image of the regime (same passage). Elagabalus then proceeded to the senate and asked the senators to confirm his adoption of Alexianus, as well as the change of the latter's name to Alexander and the bestowal of the rank of Caesar upon him (5.7.3–4). As seen above, Dio's account of these events does not report anything about the active role of Maesa in planning the adoption, though one must admit that this survives only through the abridgement of Xiphilinus, who abruptly switches from Elagabalus' growing unpopularity to his appearance in the senate with Maesa and Soaemias. However, as we have seen, Dio had already omitted the role of Maesa in planning Elagabalus' accession, and Dio himself affirms a belief in a divine arrangement behind the promotion of Severus Alexander. It seems, therefore, unlikely that he mentioned Maesa's concerns about the future of the dynasty and her consequent plans to save the dynasty in a lost section of his work. The long excursus over the trip made by an apparition of Alexander from the Danube down to Asia Minor and the final statement that our historian heard about this event from reliable sources have moreover the function of persuading the reader that, although divine forces were indeed behind Elagabalus' decision to promote Severus Alexander, the miracles in which Dio truly believed were not connected to the predictions of the god Elagabal.[26] This seems also to be indicated by the fact that the will of Elagabal is reported

26 The episode of the pseudo-Alexander has received considerable scholarly attention since Millar 1964, 214–218 identified the trip of this "phantom" as a re-enactment of the journey which Caracalla made in 214 with the purpose of following the path of Alexander the Great. On this topic, see Scott 2018, 143; Mallan 2017; McHugh 2017, 71 (who suggests that Maesa might have played a role in staging the apparition of the pseudo-Alexander with the aim of persuading Elagabalus to adopt his cousin) and Pownall in this volume.

in indirect speech, while the false Alexander appears to be reported in Dio's own voice.[27]

Notably, the appearance of spirits (δαίμονες) can be found elsewhere in Dio's account of his own times, always in relation to the imminent downfall of individuals whose positions had become increasingly precarious. For example, during the reign of Commodus, a large and grim woman who was later thought to be a spirit (73[72].13.3 [Xiph.]: παρθένος τις μεγάλη καὶ βλοσυρά […] ἥν δαίμονα ἐκ τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα συμβάντων ἐνόμισαν) triggered the popular revolt which ultimately led to the overthrow of the powerful Prefect of the Guard Cleander, whose authority was already weakened on account of his manifest corruption, which a famine afflicting the populace of Rome had made even more evident. A few decades later, when Macrinus' plans to murder Caracalla were already underway, "a spirit having the aspect of a man" (δαίμων τις ἀνθρώπου σχῆμα ἔχων) appeared in Rome leading a donkey up to the Capitol and then to the imperial palace, claiming that Caracalla was dead, and Jupiter was in charge. After having been arrested and sent to Caracalla, the spirit said that he was not destined to meet him, but a new emperor, and suddenly vanished after having reached Capua (79[78].7.4–5). Finally, at some point during the brief reign of Macrinus, when a flood of exceptional intensity was laying waste to Rome, a grim and gigantic woman (γυνή […] βλοσυρὰ καὶ ὑπέρογκος) appeared once again, declaring that such a disaster was insignificant in comparison to what was going to happen in the future (79[78].25.5). With all this in mind, the appearance of the pseudo-Alexander, which is placed right at the beginning of the series of events leading to the assassination of Elagabalus, might well be interpreted as the decisive omen which, in Dio's eyes, revealed that the reign of the latter was going to end soon.

Thus, as in the case of Elagabalus' rise to power, Dio gave space to prophecies and omens rather than describing what might have been brewing behind the scenes at the imperial court. He did not believe in the truthfulness of the prophecy of Elagabal, just as he does not seem, in truth, to have put much faith in the prophecy which had urged Eutychianus to bring Elagabalus to the legionary camp. He instead produced his own miracles, which in his opinion were unequivocally indicating that big changes were underway.

3 Julia Maesa and Her Daughters in Dio's Account: Some Reflections

All in all, I think that it is possible to draw at least two conclusions from the reading of Dio's passages concerning Elagabalus' rise to power and his decision

27 I owe this suggestion to Colin Bailey.

to adopt and promote Severus Alexander to the rank of Caesar. The first is that prophecies of the god Elagabal and other oracles seem indeed to have been used by the regime to disguise the initiatives of Julia Maesa and to make them more acceptable to her contemporaries who would scarcely have tolerated seeing an imperial woman openly orchestrating the deposition of emperors and the creation of new ones. I believe there are good reasons to suppose that the information regarding the god Elagabal persuading a freedman of Maesa to take her nephew to the camp of the *legio III Gallica* was in the letters sent by Elagabalus to the armies and to the provincial governors. Yet the whole story was in all probability the idea of Maesa, whose skill at spreading rumours is confirmed by her successful attempts to depict the young Avitus Bassianus and, later, the young Bassianus Alexianus as sons of Caracalla. As for Elagabal's prophecy, which according to Elagabalus ordered him to adopt his cousin, I think there is a very good chance that Dio is reporting genuine information regarding what Elagabalus said in the senate. Although it is unlikely that he was present when the emperor delivered his speech (see below), he might have been informed by fellow senators or by announcements of the adoption sent to the provinces. It could also be the case that he read the minutes of the meeting in the *acta senatus*, which, as argued by a recent study by Letta, Dio might have used extensively in writing his account of the reign of Elagabalus.[28]

The second conclusion is that, unlike Herodian, when describing the advents of both Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, Dio prefers the official explanations provided by the regime (i.e., Maesa and her daughters) to a reality which should have been quite obvious to many of his contemporaries, including Herodian and, conceivably, Dio himself.[29] Interestingly, even if we discount Herodian's account as a version of the facts which owes too much to the phantasy of the historian, the constant presence of the Syrian imperial women around the young Elagabalus is sufficiently evident in many episodes taken from Dio's narration of the reign of this emperor: During the final confrontation

28 Letta 2016, especially 268, where he notes that Dio certainly had the opportunity of researching the *acta senatus* towards the end of Elagabalus' reign, when he spent some time in Rome after returning from Africa (80[80].1.3 [Xiph.]).

29 At 53.19.1–6 Dio explains that, as far as his narration of the history of the empire is concerned, he mostly relates information based on official reports. Being accurate, so he says, is nearly impossible given both the complexity of events happening in territories distant from Rome and the manipulation of the truth by the people in power. Nevertheless, he immediately adds: προσέσται μέντοι τι αὐτοῖς καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς δοξασίας, ἐς ὅσον ἐνδέχεται, ἐν οἷς ἄλλο τι μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ θρυλούμενον ἠδυνήθην ἐκ πολλῶν ὧν ἀνέγνων ἢ καὶ ἤκουσα ἢ καὶ εἶδον τεκμήρασθαι ("in addition to these [reports], however, my own opinion will be given, as far as possible, whenever I have been able, from the abundant evidence which I have gathered from my reading, from hearsay, and from what I have seen, to form a judgment that differs from the common report").

between the troops of Elagabalus and Macrinus, Maesa and Soaemias leapt down from their chariots and restrained the soldiers from abandoning the fight with their lamentations (79[78].38.4); Soaemias is said to have been the virtual wife of Eutychianus/Gannys, who after the defeat of Macrinus had been entrusted with the task of mentoring the young Elagabalus and been thoroughly satisfactory to Maesa and Soaemias (80[79].6.2–3); Maesa and Soaemias sang barbaric chants to the god Elagabal when in Rome (80[79].11.3 [Xiph.]); Maesa tried to discourage Elagabalus from bestowing honours upon the charioteer Hierocles, one of his favourites (80[79].15.4 [Exc. Val.]); together with Mamaea, she protected Severus Alexander from Elagabalus' attempts to murder him (80[79].19.2 [Xiph.]); both Maesa and Soaemias sat at the side of Elagabalus while he delivered his speech in the senate (80[79].17.2 [Xiph.]); as a consequence of Elagabalus' growing intemperance, it was noticed that Maesa had started to hate him, to such a degree that she began to favour Severus Alexander as if he were the only true son of Caracalla (80[79].19.4 [Xiph]); Soaemias and Mamaea had a quarrel in the praetorian camp immediately before the assassination of Elagabalus, who died while clinging to his mother (80[79].20.1–2 [Xiph.]); finally, the praetorians slew Ulpian in the imperial palace after he had sought the protection of Alexander and Mamaea (80[80].2.2 [Xiph.]). Such an abundance of details is indeed indicative of how Maesa and her daughters were spending a lot of time in close contact with Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, but one may nevertheless note that these are all incidental episodes. On the one hand, they suggest that Maesa and her daughters were much more than passive spectators of the events. Yet, on the other hand, they are not fundamental turning points as in the account of Herodian. They were evidently meant to increase the emphasis upon the indiscipline of the soldiers, upon the barbaric connotations of the Syrian customs brought to court by Elagabalus, and, most of all, upon the wickedness and debauchery of the latter. The juiciest part, namely Maesa's role as "emperor-maker", seems to have been consciously omitted from Dio's narration and concealed by the prophecies of Elagabal and other omens.

The most probable reasons for Dio's decision to pass over this important detail might be connected, I think, to the development of his senatorial career. After Pertinax appointed him to the praetorship (74[73].12.1 [Xiph.]), Dio might have held a suffect consulship during the reign of Septimius Severus[30] but then remained virtually inactive for the entire reign of Caracalla. As seen above, during the reign of Macrinus, Dio was entrusted with an administrative task of relatively minor importance, the curatorship (or perhaps the correctorship) of

30 Molin 2016, 440. *Contra* Letta 2019, 164–167.

Pergamum and Smyrna.[31] He was still holding this position when Elagabalus spent the winter of 218/219 in Nicomedia (80[79].7.3–4 [Xiph.]), and a period of recovery from an illness forced him to prolong his stay in Asia Minor (80[80].1.2 [Xiph.]), probably until 220 or 221. The situation started to change significantly soon thereafter, however. As soon as his convalescence ended, at some point between the end of the reign of Elagabalus and the beginning of that of Severus Alexander, Dio was sent to Africa (80[80].1.2 [Xiph.]), possibly as imperial legate of consular rank, as recently suggested by Christol, or perhaps as legate of the *legio III Augusta*, as reaffirmed by Letta.[32] Then he returned to Rome, but after a brief period in the capital, he was entrusted with the governorship of Dalmatia (80[80].1.3 [Xiph.]).[33] From this province, he was sent to govern Pannonia Superior (same passage). Here he ruled the soldiers "with a strong hand" (ἐγκρατῶς), an attitude which caused the praetorians to complain about him to Alexander and demand his surrender for fear that someone might compel them to submit to the same regime (80[80].4.2 [Xiph.]).[34] Then Dio goes on to say that Severus Alexander paid no attention to them but rather honoured him in various ways, most notably by appointing him *consul ordinarius* for the year 229 together with himself and taking care of all the expenditures connected to Dio's office (80[80].5.1 [Xiph.]). Despite this, the emperor urged Dio to stay out of Rome during the consulship, for the praetorians considered him an enemy and might have killed him as they had

31 Christol 2016, 455 notes that several curators of these important cities were of consular rank. This consideration holds true if we maintain that Dio supervised the administration of these cities as *corrector* rather than *curator* (cf. n. 13 above).

32 Christol 2016, 456–457, maintaining that Dio had already been consul during the reign of Severus. The possibility that Dio commanded the *legio III Augusta* in Lambaesis (Numidia) is argued by Gabba 1955, 291; Letta 1979, 131–137 and now by Letta 2019, 168–169, implying that at this point he was still a senator of praetorian status.

33 According to Letta 2019, 168, Dio's first consulship (a necessary premise to explain the governorship of Dalmatia) should date to this brief stay in Italy.

34 In the following passage (80[80].5.1 [Xiph.]), Dio says that Alexander paid no attention to the complaints of the praetorians. Cary has translated the expression πρὸς τῷ Οὐλπιανῷ καὶ ἐμὲ αἰτιάσασθαι in 80[80].4.1 [Xiph.] as "[the praetorians] complained of me to Ulpian", but according to Cleve 1988, 123–124 it would be more correct to translate the expression πρὸς τῷ Οὐλπιανῷ as "in addition to Ulpian", an interpretation which Scott 2018, 151 has recently endorsed. If we accept this translation, it would be possible to place Dio's governorship in Pannonia between the assassination of Ulpian at the hands of the praetorians (and not before) and his second consulship. In view of this, Molin 2016, 443 proposes to date the command in Africa to 222 or 223, the governorship of Dalmatia to 224 or 225 and that of Pannonia to 225 or 226. Similar conclusions are drawn by Markov 2016, 57–60. Letta 2019, 170 has, however, rejected these arguments, saying that there is no evidence to infer that Ulpian also ruled the soldiers with severity. Thus, if we stick to Cary's translation, the beginning of Dio's tenure in Pannonia could be placed as early as 223.

earlier killed Ulpian (same passage). In the end, Dio decided to retire to his native land, Bithynia, and spent the rest of his life there (80[80].5.2 [Xiph.]). All things considered, it might be easier to understand why Dio, one of the most illustrious victims of the restlessness of the soldiers,[35] put great care into describing the times he was living in as a period of growing chaos fomented by the indiscipline of the army and the indecisive actions of emperors who were weak (Macrinus) or debauched (Elagabalus), and who ultimately ended up murdered because of their manifest inability to keep the soldiers under control.[36] In order to emphasize a situation like this, there was little need to give space to the machinations of Maesa, whose absence as an active player had moreover the effect of increasing the impression of general insecurity, the sensation that the empire was drifting with winds while lacking strong leadership.

I would finally like to draw attention to a further consideration which might have influenced Dio's decision to gloss over the role of Maesa as "emperor-maker". As the turning point in Dio's career can be traced back to the time when Elagabalus' fortune was beginning to decline and Severus Alexander's future as emperor was starting to appear more and more probable, one may identify the resurrection of Dio's political career as a consequence of the choices of Maesa and her daughter Mamaea. The implementation of her strategy to replace Elagabalus with Severus Alexander roughly coincides, in fact,

35 The dramatic tone of the verses placed right at the end of Dio's work (Hom. *Il.* 11.163–164) well exemplifies, I think, the mixture of fear and resignation with which our historian decided to abandon Italy and the political life (80[80].5.4 [Xiph.]): "Εκτορα δ' ἐκ βελέων ὕπαγε Ζεὺς ἔκ τε κονίης / ἔκ τ' ἀνδροκτασίης ἔκ θ' αἵματος ἔκ τε κυδοιμοῦ ("Hector anon did Zeus lead forth out of range of the missiles, / out of the dust and the slaying of men and the blood and the uproar"). For a summary of the different interpretations of these verses, see Scott 2018, 153–154.

36 Given the circumstances of the death of Severus Alexander, who was murdered in Germany by his troops (Hdn. 6.9.6–7; *HA Sev. Alex.* 61.1–8), it would be very easy to add this emperor to the list. Yet, while providing a quick overview of Alexander's reign in his narration, Dio does not include this episode. The last historical events reported in his work, other than those directly concerning him, are the campaigns of the Persian Artaxerxes (Ardashīr) in Parthia and Media (80[80].3.1–3 [Xiph.]), which probably occurred around 224 (Frye 1983, 118–124). By emphasising, once again, the widespread indiscipline in the army, Dio adds a comment on how Artaxerxes would not have been a serious threat to the Romans, if it were not for the fact that "our armies are in such a state that some of the troops are actually joining him and others are refusing to defend themselves" (80[80].4.1 [Xiph.]: τὰ στρατιωτικὰ ἡμῖν διάκειται ὥστε τοὺς μὲν καὶ προστίθεσθαι αὐτῷ, τοὺς δὲ οὐκ ἐθέλειν ἀμύνεσθαι). On the Persian threat during the reign of Alexander, see the synthesis in McHugh 2017, 177–220 with further references. On the indiscipline of the soldiers as a leitmotiv in the last books of Dio's *Roman History*, see Scott 2018, 9–10. On Dio's view of the military in general, De Blois 1997.

with the dispatch of Dio to Africa, the first of a series of positions which, as seen above, culminated in the consulship of 229.[37]

What is more, Herodian (6.1.1–2) tells us that, when Severus Alexander eventually became emperor, Maesa and Mamaea were in full control of imperial affairs and that they carefully selected the members of the emperor's advisory council. This information is partially confirmed by the Byzantine chronicler Zonaras, who says that it was Mamaea "who gathered wise men about her son [...] selecting from the Senate the best counsellors, with whom she shared all that had to be done" (Zonar. 12.15: περὶ τὸν υἱὸν σοφοὺς ἄνδρας συνήγαγεν [...] κἀκ τῆς γερουσίας τοὺς ἀμείνονας συμβούλους προσείλετο, ἅπαν πρακτέον κοινουμένη αὐτοῖς),[38] and even by the blatantly pro-Alexander *Historia Augusta*, which reports that "after he [Alexander] succeeded to the imperial power, while still a boy, used to do everything in conjunction with his mother so that she seemed to have an equal share in the rule" (*Alex. Sev*. 14.7: *et cum puer ad imperium pervenisset, fecit cuncta cum matre, ut et illa videretur pariter imperare*).[39] From Zosimus' *New History*, which reports information derived (albeit indirectly) from the chronicle of the third-century historian Publius Herennius Dexippus, we also know that Mamaea appointed Ulpian to supervise the work of the praetorian prefects Julius Flavianus and Geminius Chrestus, and later put them aside by making Ulpian sole prefect (Zos. 1.11.2–3).[40] Consequently, it seems extremely probable that the decision to send Dio to Africa, Dalmatia and, finally, to the strategic and heavily garrisoned province of Pannonia Superior, must have been approved by either Maesa or Mamaea or perhaps by both.[41] Yet none of the information regarding the agency of Maesa and Mamaea seems to have been present in Dio's work. Quite the opposite, Dio

37 The coincidence between Dio's political re-emergence and the beginning of the schemes to elevate Severus Alexander to the rank of Caesar has been noted by Letta 1979, 135–136.

38 Admittedly, Zonaras seems to have found his information on this period in a source which mixed elements deriving from other chronicles and from the work of Herodian (Banchich & Lane 2009, 72). It is also true, however, that Zonaras does not mention Maesa. He also reports several other details which do not appear in Herodian, like Alexander's decision to bestow the title *Augusta* on Mamaea. On Alexander's *consilium principis*, see Davenport 2011 with further references.

39 Although Herodian is quoted twice in Alexander's *vita* (52.2 and 57.3), it seems that he was not the main source of information used by the anonymous author, who appears to have mostly drawn upon the so-called *Kaisergeschichte* (Rohrbacher 2013, 163). This might well explain why he does not mention Maesa.

40 Zosimus also says that Alexander appointed Flavianus and Chrestus (1.11.2). On Zosimus' use of information deriving from the work of Dexippus, perhaps through the *Annals* by Nicomachus Flavianus, see the discussion in Mecella 2007 with further references.

41 Mamaea's role in fostering Dio's career is also stressed by Potter 2004, 162–163, with particular reference to his second consulship in 229.

credits Alexander with the appointment of Ulpian, to whom he also entrusted the other business of the empire (80[80].1.1 [Xiph.]), and shortly afterwards recounts that it was Ulpian who got rid of Flavianus and Chrestus (80[80].2.2 [Xiph.]). It appears that Dio decided not to say anything about the role played by the Syrian Augustae in this case, either. Therefore, I think there are good reasons to conclude that, when writing his *Roman History* some years later, Dio deliberately avoided giving too much evidence to the fact that he himself was, in a sense, a by-product of the schemes of Maesa and Mamaea[42]: Without their intervention, his political career was evidently destined to remain pretty much deadlocked.

4 Conclusion

The agency of Julia Maesa is one of the main points of divergence between Cassius Dio and Herodian when they narrate the reign of Elagabalus. Dio gives some space to Maesa, but mostly in situations where she is just a passive spectator of the events. He seems to have consciously omitted Maesa's role in staging the accessions of both Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, a circumstance which is explicitly stressed by Herodian. When recounting how these two emperors came to power, Dio merely reports what Maesa had put in the mouth of Elagabalus, namely that it was the god Elagabal who had pulled the strings. In truth, Dio does not seem to believe these stories, but he nevertheless reports them, describing at the same time an alternative series of prodigies which he believed to be truly revealing of what was going to happen. The reason behind these narrative choices is, in my opinion, twofold. On the one hand, Dio was clearly more interested in representing an empire drifting apart, chiefly on account of the indiscipline in the army and the incompetent individuals acclaimed emperors by the soldiers, sometimes with the help of obscure and mediocre social climbers, such as Eutychianus/Gannys. In a context such as this, the clash was between the forces of disorder (the army, the weak emperors, and the ambitious and obscure middlemen) and those who, like Dio and his political patron Severus Alexander, tried, in vain, to restore order. Furthermore, it is possible that Dio did not want to portray himself as a politician who owed the most prestigious appointments in his career to an emperor, Severus Alexander, who had gained the purple thanks to the schemes of Maesa and Mamaea.

42 I am partially borrowing here an expression taken from Millar 1964, 26, who observes that "Dio's sudden rise to important posts under Severus Alexander can only be seen as a by-product of the resurgence of the Senate".

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CHAPTER 11

Imperial Fortunes: Portents, Prodigies and Dio's Astrology of the State

Selina Stewart

1 Introduction

Cassius Dio's *Roman History* manifests a preoccupation with "signs" which twentieth century scholarship before the 1980s often dismissed.[1] More recently, though, Dio's use of portents and prodigies has been accorded greater respect, as both indicators of his "firm belief in the reality of divine intervention"[2] and his credentials as an interpreter of events past and present,[3] and as examples of his political commentary firmly grounded in his personal beliefs.[4] This article will argue similarly that Dio's deployment of celestial signs and prodigies throughout his *Roman History* is authentic and deliberate, but that it is also programmatic, intentionally signaling the never-failing engagement of the gods with Rome.[5] The signs that Dio makes use of may be manifested through a variety of natural prodigies and be directed in turn at the Senate, the ruling house or republican *dynastai*, but their "intent" is far from supporting individuals, however much emperors (in particular) might see their individual destinies as also worthy of divine endorsement. Rather the reverse: Celestial intimations work along with human weakness, arrogance and greed to prompt individuals to act on their own behalf, in opposition to orthodox and divinely sanctioned behaviour within the framework of institutions, in particular the Senate. Such manifestations are an embedded feature of Dio's history of Rome, deployed at a richer and more fundamental level than that of annalistic or propagandistic tools. Dio's prodigies are agents: They warn, they prompt, they act, and collectively they help to thematize the material of Dio's history over a considerable span of historical time.

1 Miller 1964, 77, for example, dismisses Dio's use of signs as "harmless and trivial".
2 Potter 1994, 136.
3 Scott 2018, 7.
4 Langford 2013, 57, 55–63; sources for and against in Lindholmer 2018, 573 n. 28.
5 See also Bertolazzi in this volume.

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In his ambitious plan to present Roman history from Romulus and Numa to Alexander Severus, Dio has at his disposal the records of portents and prodigies which were also available to his historian-predecessors; Cornell, for example, argues that a substantial Etruscan literature recording divinatory observations and events in the human sphere related to them survived into the Imperial period.[6] But it should be noted that Dio has chosen to use such material in opposition to some powerful and influential critics: the dismissive opinion of Cato on setting down unnecessary trivialities like eclipses[7]; the "withering rationalism" conveyed by "Marcus" in Cicero's *Div*. 2.43–46[8]; and the small weight that Livy gives in his preface to supernatural events (*Praef.* 8), even as he frequently dutifully records them at the beginning of a new year.[9] Lucretius is predictably scornful of "unrolling Etruscan scrolls in vain attempt to read the hidden mind of gods" (Lucr. 6.164–165: *non Tyrrhena retro volventem carmina frustra / indicia occultae divum perquirere mentis*), while Seneca rationalizes meteorological phenomena such as the lightning-strikes believed by the Etruscans to be so predictive of human affairs (*QNat.* 2.32.2).[10] Writing on the Julio-Claudians roughly a century before Dio, Tacitus notes the erosion of religious practices under pressure from emperors increasingly arrogating religious

6 On the survival of Etruscan records of celestial events see Cornell 1976, 411–439; Linderski 1985, 207–234; MacIntosh Turfa 2012 (on the Etruscan-origin Brontoscopic Calendar, plausibly argued to be a translation by Nigidius Figulus); de Grummond 2013; and Hay 2019, 219–222, for particular fragments of Sulla's memoirs demonstrating frequent reliance on Etruscan prodigies which he interprets as referring to himself.

7 See the fragment of Cato's *Origines* quoted with disapproval in Gell. *NA* 2.28.6 = Cato *FrHist* F 80: *non lubet scribere, quod in tabula apud pontificem maximum est, quotiens annona cara, quotiens lunae aut solis lumine caligo aut quid obstiterit* ("I do not care to write what is on the tablet at the house of the Pontifex Maximus, how often the grain was high in price, how often darkness, or whatever, obscured the light of the moon or sun," trans. Cornell).

8 Hayes 1959, 3. Cicero's position on divination in *De divinatione* in particular has long been debated; see *inter alia* discussion in Lehoux 2014, 34–46 and now Andrew Dyck's edition and commentary on *Div.* II (Dyck 2020). What is not contentious is the strength and vitality of the case of "Marcus" against the defense by "Quintus" of the Stoic endorsement of divination.

9 Cf. Livy's account of Scipio Africanus' religiosity at 26.19.3–9, which characterizes Scipio's religious behaviour as calculated display (26.19.4: *aut per nocturnas visa species aut velut divinitus mente monita agens* ["he generally spoke and acted as though he were guided either by visions of the night or by some divine inspiration," trans. Roberts]), in direct contrast to Dio's Scipio whose identical actions are portrayed as high-minded (f. 57.38.6: μεγαλόφρων) and displaying genuine religious dedication (f. 57.39: τὸ θεῖον ἀκριβῶς ἤγαλλεν); the two portraits are diametrically opposed where religion is concerned. For the passage in Livy see Scheid 2015, 82–83.

10 See for example Williams 2012, chapter 8.

authority to themselves.[11] But as we shall see, Dio's use of that feature of the annalistic tradition that appends yearly prodigies presents a significant contrast to the practice of earlier historians, including Tacitus, both in the amount that he records and in their framing.

The divine "signaling" that is the topic of this article encompasses all phenomena that are beyond the ordinary, expected and accountable: celestial phenomena such as eclipses and shooting stars; natural disasters such as volcanoes, floods and storms; "supernatural" visions, apparitions and events such as giants, "monstrous" zoological births and entrails, animated statues or other artifacts; crowds moving and speaking in unison; and visions in dreams.[12] With the exception of the last two, these prodigies are wordless: They do not express themselves linguistically, whether cryptically or straightforwardly. The words spoken by crowds in unison are still "prodigious" phenomena, though: They are divine by default, since they are unaccountable in the merely human realm, but they also convey (limited) verbal meaning – a single sentence at the most. The material basis for this article is prodigies that come without a script, and as such must each be interpreted individually – their meaning derived from their situatedness in the text – as well as collectively as vital components of the Roman world that Dio enacts.[13]

Roman identity was intimately tied to the celestial. Scott L. Montgomery makes this point neatly by juxtaposing passages from the celebrated *Almagest* by second century CE Alexandrian astronomer Claudius Ptolemy and Cicero's *De officiis* on the ultimate benefits of studying the stars and planets.[14] According to Ptolemy, the study of the heavenly bodies benefits its practitioners through the contemplation of such qualities as "good order" and "due proportion", making them "lovers of divine beauty, and making habitual in them, and as it were natural, a like condition for the soul" (*Alm*. 1.1). For Cicero, youthful translator of Aratus' Hellenistic poem on the constellations, the benefit runs in the opposite direction: "Service is better than mere theoretical knowledge, for the study

11 On Tiberius' religious encroachments in the *Annals* see Shannon-Henderson 2019, 25–69.

12 On the ultimate resistance of *ostenta, portenta, prodigia* and *monstra* to discrete classification despite valiant attempts, see Schultz 2014, 151–152 with references.

13 Osgood 2019 argues that Dio recognizes both divinely inspired Sibylline oracles and spurious or inauthentic varieties occasionally in circulation, making use of the former as historiographic devices. While the Sibylline oracles as conveyors of elaborated linguistic meaning, however veiled, occupy a distinct category in Dio's repertoire that is beyond the scope of this article, his distinguishing the one kind from the other does reinforce the underlying and constitutive reality of the divine in Dio.

14 Montgomery 2000, 35–36.

and knowledge of the universe would be in some part lame and defective were no practical results to follow" (*Off.* 43.153). For Montgomery,

> Ptolemy's universe, no less than Cicero's, contains an axis of moral precept, but it turns in the opposite direction. Mathematics and its application to the heavens are a means of initiation into the higher order of things and thus harmony between human and divine.... In [Cicero's] *Dream of Scipio*, the one work where the Roman translator of Plato and Aratus takes time to contemplate the heavens and the place of human beings within them, the narrator is borne upward into the celestial realm not to gaze on the stars and planets but instead to look back upon the Earth....[15]

Or, one might add, to look back upon Rome. We might also use Montgomery's description of Cicero's taking time to "contemplate the heavens" as a reminder of that earth-sky axis embedded in Roman religious terminology and the physical situating of religion, expressed in Varro's threefold definition of *templum* (*Ling.* 7.9) as a region of the sky (from *tueor* "to behold"), as a foundation on earth related to the celestial region for augury or taking auspices, and finally as a constructed site for "contemplation" (*contemplare*). Varro neatly supports his etymologizing by quoting a fragment of Ennius' *Medea: Contempla et templum Cereris ad laevam aspice*.

A word on astrology: Dio credits certain individuals with astrological skills and the ability to correctly read part of their personal fortune in the stars, but in the narrative thread that is Dio's portrait of celestial concern with Rome, personal astrology plays little role. Horoscopic skill, particularly as a trait attached to the more solipsistic emperors, functions now and then as a counterpoint to the real business of paying proper attention to the stars.

2 Beginnings

Both the conception and the extinction of Romulus, founder of Rome, were said to have been attended by total eclipses of the sun; Plutarch makes reference to both (*De Fort. Rom.* 320c; *Vit. Rom.* 12.5) a century before Dio. But comparing the authors is instructive. Plutarch explains both eclipses in terms of Fortuna favouring Romulus, even above the founder's own virtue (equally personified); in Dio's account, preserved by Zonaras and seemingly by John of

15 Montgomery 2000, 36.

Antioch, the second eclipse aids the senators who, having torn Rome's founder apart in the Senate, are able to conceal the deed until the murdered man is reported by one Julius Proclus to have ascended to the sky (Ioann. Antioch., fr. 32.7–22 M):[16]

> ὅθεν μισήσαντες αὐτὸν καὶ περιέχοντες ἐν τῷ βουλευτηρίῳ δημηγοροῦντα διεσπάραξάν τε καὶ διέφθειραν. Συνήρατο δὲ αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ λαθεῖν ζάλη μεγίστη τοῦ ἀέρος καὶ ἔκλειψις ἡλίου, ὅπερ που καὶ ὡς ἐγεννᾶτο γέγονεν.... ἀφανισθέντος τε οὕτως αὐτοῦ τὸ πλῆθος καὶ οἱ στρατιῶται μάλιστα ἐκεῖνον ἐζήτουν, αὐτοὶ δ᾽ ἐν ἀπόρῳ ἦσαν μήτε ἐξειπεῖν τὸ πραχθὲν ἔχοντες μήτε βασιλέα καταστῆσαι δυνάμενοι. ταρασσομένων οὖν αὐτῶν καί τι παρασκευαζομένων δρᾶσαι Ἰούλιός τις Πρόκλος, ἀνὴρ ἱππεύς, στειλάμενος ὡς καὶ ἑτέρωθέν ποθεν ἥκων, εἰσεπήδησεν ἐν τῷ μέσῳ καὶ ἔφη· "μὴ λυπεῖσθε Κυιρῖται· ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτὸς τὸν Ῥωμύλον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνιόντα εἶδον...."
>
> They hated him because of this, and surrounding him as he was speaking in the senate-house they tore him apart and killed him. They were helped in concealment by a great swirl of mist and an eclipse of the sun, as happened similarly when he was conceived.... After his disappearance in this way the people and the soldiers searched for him assiduously, while the senators were neither able to explain what they had done nor appoint a new king. The crowd becoming restless and ready to act, a certain Julius Proclus, a knight, having dressed himself as if he had just arrived from somewhere, rushed among them and said: "Do not grieve, Quirites! For I myself saw Romulus ascending to the heavens...."[17]

16 Cass. Dio F. 6.1[aa] = Joh. Ant. F 11 [Mariev]. The question as to whether F. 6.1[aa] is an authentic fragment of Dio is a vexed one. Accepted in the editions of Dindorf, Boissevain and Cary, the question arises from its unique status as the only fragment preserved from the early books of Dio in John of Antioch's seventh century CE *Historical Chronicle*. Mallan 2018 cautiously assigns it to a category of dubious Dio fragments in John of Antioch; however, Roberto 2016 emphasizes Boissevain's point concerning the status of Julius Proclus as a ἱππεύς only in this fragment and in Zonaras, in marked contrast to other accounts: He is γεωργικὸς and *agrestis* in Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 2.63.3–4 and Cic. *Rep*. 2.10.20, and, at the other end of the scale, γένει δοκιμώτατος in Plut., *Rom*. 28.1. For further argumentation in support of F. 6.1[aa] as a genuine fragment of Dio Book 1, perhaps preserved in an epitome or anthology available to John of Antioch, see Roberto 2016, 72–73.

17 All Greek text of Cassius Dio's *Roman History* is taken from Cary's Loeb Classical Library edition (1914–1927), reprinting Boissevain's text. Translations are also taken from Cary unless specified otherwise; this passage is my own translation. For discussion of ἀήρ and its divine properties of concealment, see Stewart 2013, 235–240.

The senators' attack is prompted by Romulus' attitude: He was well-disposed (διαπρέπων) to the soldiery but haughty (ὑπερφρονῶν) to citizens and senators alike (Ioann. Antioch., fr. 32.1–4 M). We do not have Dio's description of the eclipse at conception (or possibly birth, referred to as ἐγεννᾶτο), but here he presents the two as linked halves, framing the life of the founder of Rome. The eyewitness account of Romulus' ascension is transparently fabricated by the quick-thinking Julius Proclus, who pretends to arrive from witnessing the apparition in a breathless hurry. Dio makes it plain that the heavens signaled Romulus' vital contribution as founder of Rome with the first eclipse while protecting his murderers with the second, but they provide no indication of his translation to the heavens, since Proclus' action is deliberate deception; Romulus' apotheosis then is either not on the celestial "to do" list according to Dio, or at least is not worth signaling. At the start of his history, Dio presents these prodigies as sent by the heavens on behalf of *Rome*, ratifying obviously murderous action taken by the senators as a unit while giving no indication of any putative ascension of Romulus, the false account of which is intentionally directed toward the common people's and the soldiers' (τὸ πλῆθος καὶ οἱ στρατιῶται) superstitious credulity.[18] Yet Romulus as a gift to Rome from divine Providence is compared even to the saintly Numa (Cass. Dio 1.6.5 [EV]):

> καὶ ἐκεῖνος οὐκ ἀθεεί σφισι ἐξ ἴσου τῷ Ῥωμύλῳ ὑπάρξαι ἔδοξεν … οὕτω μὲν δὴ δι᾽ ἀμφοτέρους αὐτοὺς καὶ ἰσχυρὰ ταχὺ καὶ εὔκοσμος ἡ πόλις ἐγένετο.
>
> [Numa], no less than Romulus, seemed to have been provided for them by divine guidance…. In this way, because of both of them the city quickly became strong and well ordered.

The apparent paradox of the heavens signaling both Romulus' foundational contribution and equally necessary demise is resolved as long as the vector is understood: The heavens protect Rome. Providence will indulge in similar, but increasingly frantic, signaling along the road to the Late Republic.

18 Although the people are depicted as credulous in this and other episodes, divine inspiration may also operate through them – ὁ δῆμος – acting in eerie unison, in analogous function to other heaven-sent prodigies: see 74(73).13.3 (against Didius Julianus after his assassination of Pertinax) and 76(75).4.4–5 (against the rivalry between Albinus and Severus), also discussed in Langford 2013, 38.

3 The Republic

A cavalcade of disastrous signs makes its appearance as Dio's *Roman History* approaches the turning point of Augustus' principate. The late second century, as covered by the surviving fragments of Books 30–50, offers multiple examples of warnings in the shape of unnatural signs. Signs appear to increase, however, in the first century BCE (with due allowance given for the amount of material we are missing from earlier periods), and to expand in terms of variety (the birth of the elephant-shaped pig in 46 BCE might be taken as an example [43.2.2–3]). Signs warn of enemy action, as when portents appear prior to Carrhae which are difficult of interpretation to all but Crassus, who alone intuits that they refer to the Parthian war that is about to engulf him; other portents signal disaster from within.[19] Book 37 is particularly rich in examples of heaven-signaled internal discord and of the increasing unmistakability of divine forewarning, becoming in effect a flood of meaning loosed on Rome.

Book 37 covers six years, beginning with Pompey in the East in 69 BCE; there are two excursuses, the first on Mithridates and his death (10–14), and the second on Judaism (15–19), after which Pompey returns to Rome and the First Triumvirate is secretly formed as Book 37 draws dramatically to a close. On two occasions in this book, Dio expresses his view that warning signs from the heavens are plain enough for even an ordinary citizen to read. In the first instance, during a period characterized by a fall of thunderbolts out of a clear sky, flashes of fire proceeding heavenward, an earthquake and numerous "human apparitions", the celestial signs are unmistakable enough "that anyone, even a layman, was bound to know in advance what was signified by them" (37.25.2: ὥστε πάντα τινὰ καὶ ἰδιώτην τὰ σημαινόμενα ἀπ' αὐτῶν προγνῶναι). In the second, we are expressly told that although the *triumviri* hid their alliance from the Roman people, they could not conceal it from the heavens, and a revelation from τὸ δαιμόνιον forewarns of the disasters that will arise from the triumvirate's actions (37.58.2–4):

> Οὐ μέντοι καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον τὰ πραττόμενα ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἠγνόει, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάνυ τοῖς τι συνεῖναι τῶν τοιούτων δυναμένοις εὐθὺς τότε πάντα τὰ ἔπειτα ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἐσόμενα ἐξέφηνε· χειμών τε γὰρ τοιοῦτος ἐχαίφνης τῆν τε πόλιν ὅλην καὶ τὴν χώραν ἅπασαν κατέσχεν ὥστε πάμπολλα μὲν δένδρα πρόρριζα ἀνατραπῆναι, πολλὰς δὲ οικίας καταρραγῆναι, τά τε πλοῖα τὰ ἐν τῷ Τιβέριδι καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἄστυ καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἐκβολὰς αὐτοῦ ναυλοχοῦντα βαπτισθῆναι, καὶ τὴν γέφυραν τὴν ξυλίνην διαφθαρῆναι, καί τι καὶ θέατρον πρὸς πανήγυρίν τινα ἐκ θυρῶν

19 For prodigies associated with Carrhae see also Cic. *Div*. 2.84.

> ᾠκοδομημένον ἀνετράπη, καὶ ἄνθρωποι παρὰ πάντα ταῦτα παμπληθεῖς ἀπώλοντο. ἐκεῖνα μὲν δὴ οὖν καθάπερ εἰκὼν τῶν μελλόντων σφίσι καὶ ἐν τῇ γῇ καὶ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι συμβήσεσθαι προεδείχθη.
>
> Yet heaven was not ignorant of their doings, but then and there revealed very plainly to those who could understand any such signs all that was to result later because of them. For of a sudden such a storm descended upon the whole city and all the country that quantities of trees were torn up by the roots, many houses were shattered, the boats moored in the Tiber both near the city and at its mouth were sunk, and the wooden bridge destroyed, and a theatre built of timbers for some festival collapsed, and in the midst of all this, great numbers of human beings perished. These signs were revealed in advance, as an image of what should befall the people both on land and on water.

As dramatic as the last passage is, that "the times are out of joint" will be increasingly and hectically revealed by the heavens from Book 37 through to Actium in Book 50. The rollcall of prodigies from Book 37 to Julius Caesar's assassination in Book 44 in 44 BCE is a positive wilderness of wolves and owls appearing in the city; earthquakes and thunderbolts; blazes of light (proceeding, at 37.25.2, disturbingly from earth to heaven); statues weeping, sweating and bleeding; inundations; temples shifting their orientation; objects flying in the air – including blood – and blood issuing from a bakeshop at 42.26.1. In connection to the prodigies of Book 42, Dio mournfully comments on the political chaos caused by the δυνασταί, whose behaviour will be replicated by others of the same type: "so these men [Milo and Caelius] died, but that did not bring quiet to Rome" (42.26.1: καὶ οἱ μὲν οὕτως ἀπέθανον, οὐ μέντοι καὶ ἡσυχία παρὰ ἐν τῇ Ῥωμῃ ἐγένετο). Clodius may die at the hands of Milo, and Milo and Caelius in their turn, but still more unrest is presaged immediately following their demise as a swarm of bees take up residence on the Capitol (42.26.1).

It is important to note that in the spiraling, chaotic world of dynast-eat-dynast, the heavens may spotlight an individual, a Clodius or a Caelius, just as in the early days they signaled Romulus and as in later days they will forecast a Nero, a Marcus or a Severus; but even in regard to men of good character, such signaling in no wise foretells virtuous action on the individual's part – only a kind of dramatic inference, usually negative, about the safety of Rome itself. For most of the first century BCE the heavens erupt in signals, fireworks of light and sound that predict and admonish, to little apparent avail because the system is in meltdown. The list of unprecedented privileges awarded Julius Caesar by a senate giddy with relief at his assumption of dictatorial control prompts

Dio's well-known melancholic comparison of monarchy and democracy: The former sounds bad but is the more practicable since it is easier to find one virtuous leader than several, because "it does not belong to the majority of men to acquire virtue" (44.2.1: οὐ γὰρ προσήκει τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀρετὴν κτᾶσθαι). One inadequate leader (φαῦλός τις) is preferable to a group of similarly inadequate men (τοῦ πλήθους τῶν ὁμοίων), and rule by the similarly challenged is the condition of the accelerating train wreck of the first century before Actium.

The aside on monarchy and democracy, to be fully elaborated by Maecenas' celebrated discourse in the same vein in Book 52, is carefully positioned in the immediate run-up to Julius Caesar's assassination, as part of a section that ends with Dio's reflection that had Brutus and Cassius only thought along these lines, they would not have killed Caesar – regardless of the ways in which Caesar provokes the event himself, as Dio proceeds to itemize. But most blame in Dio's account explicitly attaches to the senators who over-honour Caesar, showering him with accolades that the historian details honour by honour and excess by excess, making clear all the while that the honours are unprecedented and, as it were, unconstitutional. Their over-honouring of Caesar becomes an illustration of Dio's claim that human nature shows itself to be unrestrainable unless those institutional and constitutional guidelines established for the Roman state are maintained. Caesar himself had increased the number of senators to 900, partly by appointing soldiers and freedmen's sons, and had allowed prefects to appoint more prefects the day after they themselves took office: The heavens will respond by warning "Rome" of the coming civil-war misery explicitly on the night before the assassination through dreams and other signs within Caesar's house (Mars' armour clattering and the doors to Caesar's bedroom flying open).[20] Times and the state are indeed "out of joint". If sheeted dead are not precisely squeaking and gibbering in the Roman streets, as they do in the catalogue of portents in *Hamlet* echoing Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*, Horatio's description nevertheless captures some of the essence and cataclysm of Dio's *fin-de-dynasteia* world.[21] But where Plutarch's portents are usually oriented towards the hero's character and mental state at times of crisis,[22] Dio's portents appear oriented towards the state; here they signal the dangers of acting unconstitutionally, inciting assassination *and* civil war. The portents are identical; the inference to be drawn is different.

20 Republican and imperial sources are plentiful on the subject of *omina* predicting Caesar's downfall: See among others Ripat 2006, 167–173 and Santangelo 2013 *passim*.

21 See Kemezis 2014, 90–149 for Dio's eruptive Republican and *dynasteiai* "narrative modes". On Shakespeare and Plutarch's *Caesar*, see "Caesar and Julius Caesar: Plutarch and Shakespeare" in Pelling 2011.

22 Brenk 2017, 97–98.

The immediate post-assassination prodigies are few and decidedly anti-climactic in Dio, almost celestial afterthoughts – some unusual thunder and heavy rains (44.52.1) – and the last set of phenomena prior to the onset of the principate belong to Octavian. The infamous *sidus Iulium* that brightens the northern sky appears not in Book 44 devoted to Julius, which ends with a detailed account of the assassination and its aftermath, but in Book 45, when Antony and Octavian are jockeying for position and the populace interprets the star as a sign of Caesar's deification, which is naturally taken advantage of by Octavian (45.7.1).[23] That his later inauguration of the principate is a positive change for Rome is clear from more than Maecenas' disquisition, yet Dio interprets Octavian's celestial signs less as positive character affirmation than as signals of celestial consternation and the social disruption still to come. His entrance to the city, which Dio paints as poorly thought out and ill-timed, is attended by a sign heralding uncertainty (45.4.4.2–6):

> οὐ μέντοι καὶ κακῶς βεβουλεῦσθαι ἔδοχεν, ὅτι καὶ κατώρθωσε. τὸ μέντοι δαιμόνιον πᾶσαν οὐχ ἀσαφῶς τὴν αὐτόθεν μέλλουσάν σφισι ταραχὴν ἔσεσθαι προεσήμηνεν· ἐς γὰρ τὴν Ῥώμην ἐσιόντος αὐτοῦ ἶρις πάντα τὸν ἥλιον πολλὴ καὶ ποικίλη περιέσχεν.
>
> Nevertheless, he was not thought to have planned badly, because he proved to be successful. Heaven, however, indicated in no obscure manner all the confusion that would result to the Romans from [his precipitate arrival], for as he was entering Rome a great halo with the colours of the rainbow surrounded the whole sun.

Individual virtue is a fine thing, but Rome must rely on other, more reliable and more enduring foundations, and this remains the case when emperors rule.

4 The Imperial Period

Astrology entered the Greek world in the fourth century BCE but to little fanfare; it would gain a stronger foothold in Rome via Egypt than it would in Hellenistic Greece, which was still largely preoccupied with spherical astronomy down to Ptolemy in the second century CE.[24] The earliest reputable professional

23 Santangelo 2013, 246–250.

24 On the pre-eminence and sophistication of astronomy in the service of astrology in Roman Egypt in the first three centuries CE, see Jones 1994, 25–51.

astrologers we encounter in Rome belong to the end of the Republic and the Julio-Claudian dynasty: Cicero's long-standing friend Nigidius Figulus, a scholar, natural historian and writer on Etruscan divination and the gods as well as astrology, was greatly admired as a model of wisdom and self-control, while Tiberius' Thrasyllus was also accorded a fair measure of respect.[25] Key to their success was learning, the accuracy of prediction, and self-restraint, which enabled them to withstand measures taken against foreign and domestic astrologers who were accused of dealing in predictions and magic that were assumed to be harmful.[26] Emperors in Dio are often represented as believing in astrology while frequently attempting to control such activity beyond their circle, yet time and again they fail to grasp the fundamental point of what Dio's history presents as divine, if wordless, communication in the form of prodigies and portents, in marked contrast to personal horoscopic, i.e., astrological, prediction. Apparent exceptions to this rule are Dio's Augustus and Tiberius and, ultimately, Septimius Severus; Augustus, for example, is inclined to suspect that comets, blazing skies, columns of fire that collapse Alpine peaks and a statue of Victory swinging around to confront the Roman camps at the time of the 9 CE Teutoburg disaster are together indicative of divine anger and retribution (56.24.2: οὐκ ἄνευ δαιμονίου τινὸς ὀργῆς).[27] Yet Augustus' "suspicion" (ὑποψίαν) concerning these striking phenomena is a far cry from the astrological certainty he evinces when he publishes his own horoscope for all to see (56.25.5–6): Of the astrological he is in no doubt, but the potential of prodigies to admonish and warn on behalf of Rome is unheeded. The same can be shown for Tiberius and Severus. The distinction between the two attitudes is crucial in Dio.

Tiberius is himself an expert in astrology; he is also a hoarder of secrets (57.1.1). For someone who cultivates as much knowledge concerning divine predictability as Tiberius, Dio's account emphasizes the tactics of unpredictability the emperor deploys toward others, not only expressing opinions and desires exactly inverse to what he actually wants, but also, Dio takes care to inform us, applying even this inverse-protocol inconsistently in order to mislead (57.1.4–5):

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25 Figulus died in 45 BCE, one year after his exile for having fought for Pompey at Pharsalus: Cic. *Att*. 7.24; Luc. 1.670.

26 See for example expulsions under Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Vitellius and Vespasian; Ripat 2011.

27 On the Teutoburg prodigies see Benario 2005, 590–593, who argues that Dio's prodigies do not provide corroborative evidence for Manilius' account of the same at 1.896–903 in the absence of supporting contemporary narratives; the assumption that Dio's fondness for portents is enough to render his account suspect is not substantiated.

> ὥστε χαλεπὸν μὲν ἦν μηδεμίαν αὐτοῦ σύνεσιν ποιεῖσθαι (πολλὰ γὰρ ἄτε πρὸς τὸ λεγόμενον ἀλλὰ μὴ πρὸς τὸ βουλόμενον συναινοῦντές οἱ ἐσφάλλοντο), χαλεπώτερον δὲ συνιέναι· τήν τε γὰρ ἐπιτήδευσιν αὐτοῦ καταφωρᾶν.
>
> While it was a dangerous matter, then, to fail to understand him – for people often came to grief by approving what he said instead of what he wished – it was still more dangerous to understand him since people were then suspected of discovering his practice.

Few were able to navigate these waters successfully, as Dio states explicitly – and perhaps unnecessarily (as Potter observes, "It took more than a knowledge of the stars to survive dinner with Tiberius").[28] Dio portrays Tiberius as able to "correctly", in Dio's view, interpret dreams that are maliciously sent by ill-wishers, whom he then proceeds to destroy (e.g., 57.15.7), and to grasp that the astrological prediction that Galba will one day rule is accurate but inoffensive as the younger Galba will be an old man when the prediction comes true. But after a flood causes people in Rome to sail the streets in boats, Tiberius appoints five senators to oversee the Tiber's water-levels, surmising that the flood was due to excessive surface-channels (57.14.8: ἐκεῖνος δὲ δὴ νομίσας ἐκ πολυπληθίας ναμάτων); an astute reckoning, but we also learn that as part of a series of portents including earthquakes, thunderbolts and leaking wine vessels, the flood is interpreted by the populace as an omen (57.14.7).[29] Confronted by such omens, Tiberius rationalizes; where astrological prediction is concerned his faith is robust, even to his cost when, for example, his belief in Thrasyllus' prediction of his death being years away makes him blind to unmistakable signs of health crisis and the danger posed by Caligula (58.28.1–2).

Dio's account of Caligula's brief reign, though detailed in other respects, is remarkably free from celestial signs in contrast to the reigns of his immediate

28 Potter 1994, 159.

29 Comparison with Tacitus' account of the same incident (*Ann.* 1.76.1) underscores Dio's situating of Tiberius as dismissive of heaven-sent prodigies while alert and attentive to personal horoscopic prediction. Tacitus' Tiberius rejects a senatorial recommendation that the Sibylline books be consulted regarding the flood, and adopts a pragmatic alternative that fails: His diversion of the Tiber creates new flooding of the countryside and elicits complaints of religious violation from surrounding *socii*. Shannon-Henderson 2019, 25–30 argues that Tacitus' account implicates Tiberius in religious failure on both counts, while Dio's, with no mention of the flooding of the countryside, allows Tiberius to end "on a high note of Imperial activity" (30) rather than failure. I would argue that while the practical solution is indeed not stigmatized in Dio, in contrast to the emperor's horoscopic preoccupations his dismissal of the portents that worry everyone else is Dio's chief concern, and a decided negative.

predecessor and successors. Suetonius identifies eleven signs as predictive of the emperor's assassination compared to Dio's two, both of which have counterparts in Suetonius: the behaviour of the statue of Jupiter at Olympia prompted by workmen trying to remove him, and an oracle giving the assassin's name, causing the emperor to arrest the wrong man.[30] The pattern developing in Dio is one of celestial signs as indicators of the outcome down the road if traditionally sanctioned modes of governing continue to be transgressed, as the only two portents recorded during the reign of Caligula suggest: While the emperor's accession was presaged under Tiberius, his assassination was heralded only by oracular consultation (if Jupiter's laughter is considered a more direct result of his attempted removal [59.28.4.3 (Xiph.)]). Dio's Claudius, on the other hand, presides over two eclipses and a host of comet sightings and other phenomena.[31] Claudius' reign in Dio is an obvious improvement over that of his predecessor in terms of the welfare of the state and of the senatorial class in particular, despite the excesses of his wives and freedmen. Why then the heavenly concern as reflected in Dio? Apart from the sudden appearance of a small island off Thera which seems to occur in conjunction with the Messalina crisis, the prodigies of his reign suggest that the chief object of concern is Nero.

Interpretation from here on is naturally complicated by the fragmentary state of preservation of the remaining books of Dio's history. What can be inferred from the material that survives is a continuing emphasis on portents that signal downward trajectories and disasters preparing to descend on Rome.

A lengthy earthquake strikes on the day and night of Nero's assumption of the *toga virilis* under Claudius in 51 CE (61[60].33.2^{c} [=Zon. 11.10]) and the sky is on fire the day Nero marries Claudius' daughter – "a major portent" (τέρας οὐ μικρόν) (61[60].33.2^{2} [Xiph.]). A comet also attends Claudius' death, but if the comet reflects Claudius' poisoning,[32] it also heralds Nero's ascension. A significant number of prodigies appear during the reign of Nero himself, warning of external threats such as the Boadicea uprising in 61 CE, but more frequently and strikingly portents appear to forecast the danger he poses for the Senate and People of Rome *before* he becomes emperor. The initially innocent-seeming phenomenon of rays "not cast by any visible beams" seen haloing him at his birth is identified as prophesying not only his becoming emperor but also his murdering of his mother (61[61].2.1). Further portents accompany the matricide in 59 CE (62[61].16.4–5: a total solar eclipse; his dinner burned by

30 Suet., *Cal.* 57.1–4.

31 On Claudius' direct access to Etruscan sources, see Cornell 1976, 417; Heurgon 1953, 92–97.

32 Perhaps also his deification; I thank Colin Bailey for this suggestion.

thunderbolts) which could be seen as mere confirmations of divine disgust, but are, following Scheid, more convincingly identified as forward-looking. The moral of the prodigies accompanying the triumphal entry in book 62(61) that Nero awards himself for having foiled his mother's fabricated conspiracy against him is, as Scheid argues, that the emperor's downfall is here predicted: "Dion n'a pas insisté sur l'impiété de Néron qu'il donne pour escomptée, mais s'est surtout attaché aux signes avant-coureurs de la chute de Néron."[33]

A fairly substantial list of celestial signs warning of Nero's proclivities is afforded Dio's audience; they do not amount to a charge of impiety pure and simple, since Nero is often shown as acting properly – unlike Caligula – with regard to religious observance. What the prodigies that appear in connection with Claudius' mistakenly adopted heir at those vital and ritually-weighted moments of birth, assumption of manhood and marriage do make crystal clear, though, is his dangerousness for Rome – not his irreligiosity, impiety or faithlessness, but his dangerousness. Finally, the signs that attend his triumphal return to Rome in 59 – an eclipse, hyper-sensitive elephants and feast *flambé* (62[61].16.4–5) – warn of his violent end, marked by a major earthquake; well-deserved his end might be, but even the most welcome of assassinations is a time of uncertainty and peril, and punishment that may extend beyond a single individual to harm the state.

The reigns of Galba and Otho over the course of ten months are attended by more perfunctory signals: Galba receives notice of his impending sovereignty (63[64].1), while an unusual bird heralds Otho's defeat at Cremona (63[64].10.3). Dio condemns Otho's licentiousness in no uncertain terms while contrasting the manner of his living ("most disgracefully", κάκιστα) and dying ("most nobly", κάλλιστα 63[64].15.2[2]). It seems that the excesses that would have marked Otho's rule had it lasted needed little supernatural signaling: "Men did not fail to realize that his rule was sure to be even more licentious and harsh than Nero's" (63[64].8.2[1]: οὐκ ἐλάνθανε δὲ ὡς καὶ ἀσελγέστερον καὶ πικρότερον τοῦ Νέρωνος ἄρξειν ἔμελλε).[34] Vitellius, however, although similarly short-reigned, receives special treatment. His first action upon arriving in Rome after Otho's defeat is to banish astrologers, for reasons unknown, who retaliate the next day by publicly and accurately forecasting the day he will die: "They answered him by putting up at night another notice, in which they commanded him in turn

33 Scheid 2016, 796: Scheid argues for Dio's manipulation of a tyrant vs. model (or at least tolerably well-behaved) emperor theme.

34 In 63[64].5.2 Otho's resentment against Galba "sets once more countless evils for the Romans", which would seem to refer, like the bird omen, to the civil war disaster that was Cremona.

to depart this life before the end of the very day on which he actually died. So accurate was their foreknowledge of what should come to pass" (64[65].1.4: καὶ αὐτῷ ἐκεῖνοι νυκτὸς ἀντιπροθέντες γράμματα ἀντιπαρήγγειλαν ἀπαλλαγῆναι ἐκ τοῦ βίου ἐντὸς τῆς ἡμέρας ἐν ᾗ ἐτελεύτησε; καὶ οἱ μὲν οὕτως ἀκριβῶς τὸ γενησόμενον προέγνωσαν). After a detailed description of greed, ruinous expenditures and dangerous irreverence we learn of a comet, two eclipses of the moon in one week and double suns appearing in warning, along with giant footprints descending from the Capitol and the doors of the temple of Jupiter clanging open on the same night; these are followed by a blood-red lunar eclipse as Vespasian's troops approach and more civil-war slaughter looms (64[65].8.1–2). Vespasian's accession, on the other hand, is predicted by a variety of benign dreams and incidents – classic *omina imperii* – and once his rule begins, marked by his respectful treatment particularly of the Senate, it is not accompanied by prodigies in the text as we have it. He too expels astrologers, but subjects Stoic and Cynic philosophers to the same treatment, unmarked by celestial omens. Vespasian's death is heralded by the appearance of a striking comet, but the emperor quips that the comet must warn of the death of the long-haired Parthian king rather than his bald self (66.17.2–3 [Xiph.]). His elder son Titus rules for two years with exemplary mildness ("not having put a single senator to death," 67.2.4 [EV]) and good sense, but is also heedless of two calamitous prodigies, the second of which Dio explicitly identifies as divine. The first is the eruption of Vesuvius, one feature of which is clearly supernatural as numerous giants are seen on the mountain.[35] In her study of volcanic phenomena in Dio, Freyburger-Galland asks why there should be such a substantial treatment of the Vesuvius eruption of 79 in his all-encompassing history of Rome, second only to Pliny's in detail, when Suetonius and the surviving portions of Tacitus do little more than mention it.[36] For Freyburger-Galland the answer lies in Dio's retreats to Capua whenever he sojourned in Italy and was able to get away in order to write his history (77[76].2.1–2: ὁσάκις ἂν ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ οἰκῶ … ἵνα σχολὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀστικῶν πραγμάτων ἄγων ταῦτα γράψαιμι): It seems quite likely that while there he witnessed the Vesuvius eruption that occurred early in the first decade of the 200s.[37] To this could be added the possibility that both this and the portent that follows – the second great fire of Rome occurring shortly before Titus' death – are significant indicators of yet more disaster on its way.

35 Cass. Dio 66.21–24, preserved at length by Xiphilinus.

36 Tacitus' *Histories* will evidently have originally included a long account based in part on Pliny's letter.

37 Freyburger-Galland 2004, 139–140; Millar 1964, 17, see also Kemezis in this volume, with consideration of the date of the Severan-era eruption.

Analogously to the prodigies heralding Claudius' successor, it would seem that the heavens are warning Rome of Domitian.

Of Domitian's murderous excesses no reminder is necessary, but his demise is instructive. The build-up to the assassination text begins (in our surviving text) with the inevitability of its being foretold: "Since no event of such magnitude happens unforeseen, various unfavourable omens occurred in the case of Domitian" (67.16.1: καὶ οὐ γάρ ἐστιν οὐδὲν τῶν τηλικούτων ἀπρόοπτον, ἄλλα τε αὐτῳ σημεῖα ἐγένετο οὐκ αἴσια). In what follows we learn that astrologers in different parts of the empire predict the day and even moment of his death, and also that the emperor dreams of the slain philosopher Rusticus approaching him with a sword and the statue of Minerva in his bedroom plunging into an abyss driving a chariot with four black horses. No *celestial* prodigies are given, however: If Dio has information about any such, he does not report them in our surviving text. Thus, in marked contrast to Domitian's ascension, dramatically prefigured in central and southern Italy, only the astrologers and the emperor himself have foreknowledge of his death; either the heavens are silent on the subject or Dio omits reference to them. The heavens are equally silent in regard to the blameless Nerva, both on his ascension and death; they are also silent on the ascension of the virtuous (πλεῖστον γάρ ἐπί τε δικαιότητι [68.6.3]) Trajan: Although Trajan himself is warned in dreams, there are no broadcast alerts in the form of the heaven-sent prodigies, comets, giant footsteps, inundations or the like that herald in Dio the advent of a dangerous emperor or civil war. His reign does see a significant natural disaster that is foretold through thunderstorms and striking winds (68.24.2–25.6): In the midst of a major earthquake in Antioch, Trajan receives divine aid when a being of uncommon size leads him to safety out through the window of his room (68.25.5). So many die or are injured in the catastrophe that "all the world governed by Rome" (68.24.2: πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη ἡ ὑπὸ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις) is affected. In the account of the earthquake and the winds which precede it, the heavens act consistently within Dio's framework by sending portents warning of the danger to Roman citizens in Antioch and even personally guiding the "good" emperor to safety.

Trajan's death and Hadrian's ascension are unmarked by portents in the surviving text other than the latter's dreaming of fire out of a clear sky passing harmlessly through him (69.2.1). Dio characterizes his rule as one of exceptional mildness (φιλανθρωπότατα) (69.2.5); although he strikes at certain individuals out of jealousy, he refrains from harming the state, extorting money and starting wars, and brings ones he had not started to a close, as well as imposing strict controls on the army (69.5.1–3). The emperor is himself fond of divination and incantations (69.11.3: μαντείαις μαγγανείαις τε παντοδαπαῖς), but typically in Dio, this is not in any way endorsed, and Hadrian's declaring

a new star to be Antinous' spirit translating to the heavens was according to Dio worthy of the general ridicule it received (69.11.2). His 'mild' 20-year reign will prove to be unmarked by portents: In accordance with Dio's heavenly protocol, an emperor's efforts to enlist the heavens on behalf of himself, as with Antinous' star, function in opposition to the thematic preoccupation of the heavens with actual Rome.

Little remains of Dio's accounts of Antoninus', Lucius Verus' and Marcus' ascensions – only the dream that Marcus experiences beforehand, recounted in a passage that follows his death, in which his shoulders and arms appear to be made of ivory (72[71].36.1). Only one portent is recorded during his reign in the material that survives: We learn of a desperate victory against the Quadi "given to him by heaven" (72[71].8.5: παρὰ θεοῦ ἐδωρήθη). In the midst of the narrative of the battle, a miraculous rain and thunder revives the Roman soldiers and impedes the enemy, at which point Dio appends "a story" (72[71].8.4: λόγος ἔχει) that an Egyptian magician accompanying Marcus invokes Mercury and causes the rain; Xiphilinus intervenes at this point to tell us that Dio appears to be in error (72[71].9.1–2: ἔοικε δὲ ψεύδεσθαι) because Marcus did not like magicians or witchcraft and it was a Christian unit that prayed for the army's deliverance. But what is striking in Dio's lengthy narrative here is the fact that the heavens in this instance *act* on behalf of Rome rather than merely warning her. It may be significant that it is Marcus who receives this favour, and a parallel to the rescue of Trajan by another agential prodigy suggests itself: The heavens intervene on behalf of "good" emperors (with allowance for Trajan's short reign) – in situations where the Roman citizenry are also involved, as with Marcus' soldiers and the grieved-for citizens of Antioch.

When Marcus dies, a portent relating to Commodus' ascension is given in the form of an oracular dream which Dio encounters with his father in Cilicia: A boy strangling two snakes and a lion pursuing a fawn both represent the Hercules-fanatic Commodus (73[72].7.2). It is not long after Commodus' ascension before plagues descend, but the thousands of deaths are nothing compared to the curse that is Commodus himself (73[72].15.1–3: ἦν δὲ ἁπάντων νοσημάτων καὶ ἁπάντων κακουργημάτων χαλεπώτερος Ῥωμαίοις ὁ Κόμμοδος). Signs of his approaching death are picked up by the senators: After one of the emperor's gladiatorial escapades, Commodus' helmet is carried from the arena through the gates the dead are taken through, causing them to believe that relief was on its way (73[72].21.3: ἀπαλλαγή τις αὐτοῦ γενήσεσθαι ἐνομίζετο), but in contrast to the senators' hopeful *interpretation* of this in regard to themselves, portents of coming disaster to Rome are clearly broadcast. A flight of eagles and a hooting owl over the Capitol, followed by a fire that human agency, both soldiers and civilians, could not extinguish before it destroyed granaries and finally burnt

itself out, make it clear to Dio that evil would overtake not only the city but all the territory over which it ruled (73[72].24.1): The post-Antonine civil wars and the "year of the five emperors" – which give rise to Dio's pamphlet on the Severus portents and ultimately his history itself – are about to descend. A portent follows hard upon Pertinax' death and Didius Julianus' ascension: Three stars appear around the sun as Didius is sacrificing before the senate-house, causing the soldiers to openly predict the new emperor's death while the hopeful senators can only look at the stars covertly (74[73].14.5 [Xiph.]: παρορῶντες). For Dio, the stars indicated the three governors who would dispute the succession (74[73].14.4 [Xiph.]: καὶ τούτους ἄρα οἱ ἀστέρες οἱ τρεῖς οἱ ἐξαίφνης φανέντες καὶ τὸν ἥλιον περισχόντες … ὑπηνίττοντο). Witnesses to the event do not see beyond the emperor's death, including Julianus who kills "many boys with magic rites" (74[73].16.5 [Xiph.]: παῖδας συχνοὺς ἐπὶ μαγγανεύμασιν) in a bid to discern the future. The heavens are again concerning themselves with Rome in the longer term: Dio is explicit that the portent signalled the civil war. Julianus is indeed about to go down, but the issue is the following phase.[38]

Severus has several dreams signifying that he will one day be emperor: These occur (among other times) on the occasion of his first admission to the Senate, when he marries and when he is governor in Lugdunum, in addition to a portent during waking hours, when he sits down on the imperial throne by accident (75[74].3.1–3).[39] But on the cosmic rather than personal level, omens forecast the danger hovering over Niger's forces when they first advance (75[74].6.3: an eagle perching on military standards and bees subsequently making honeycombs on the standards), and then rain- and lightning-storms turn their victory into a defeat resulting in casualties of 20,000 (75[74].8.1). Albinus' subsequent attack when Severus is on the throne produces striking portents witnessed once again by the historian himself: At a horse-race at the time of the Saturnalia the crowd cries with one voice about the suffering entailed by the war, which Dio explicitly identifies as divinely inspired. The senators become apprehensive and are made more so by fire in the northern sky and a miraculous rain resembling silver that Dio used to plate some bronze coins (temporarily) (76[75].4.2–7).[40] Differing from Severus' personal *omina imperii*, which as we have seen should not be taken as celestial endorsements of future emperors but rather as indicators that they are fated to be so, celestial prodigies such as meteors, silver rains and divinely inspired crowds concern disasters

38 For a detailed account of the war see Kemezis 2020, with discussion of the astral prodigy on 266.

39 See also Langford in this volume.

40 See discussion in Rubin 1980 and Langford 2013, 61.

(quite literally) such as civil wars and dangers to Rome itself, and terrible casualties will ensue before Albinus meets his end (76[75].7.1–3). We are told that Severus grabbed books from temples on his travels whenever they contained secret learning (76[75].13.2: ἀπόρρητόν τι ἔχοντα), while major portents (sea-monsters at 76[75].16.5 and Vesuvius erupting at 77[76].2.1–3) signal an upheaval of the state which Dio relates to the fall of Plautianus, whose daughter marries Caracalla in the passage immediately preceding the Vesuvius eruption. Plautianus held almost unlimited power under Severus for over a decade, until the emperor condemns him on the basis of evidence trumped up by his son and a dream concerning the late Albinus that Severus takes to be representing Plautianus, the stolen books of secret learning availing him not in the least (77[76].3.4). Severus does, however, read his *horoscope* correctly as a skilled and committed astrologer, divining that he will not return from his British campaign. Dio was able to publish a pamphlet ratifying dreams that Severus was destined to be emperor without compromising his presentation of celestial prodigies as conveyors of warnings and condemnations of Severus' rule.

The age of iron and rust will continue with a fantastic array of celestial signals until Severus Alexander ascends the throne and Dio brings his history to a close. Signs that Caracalla and his brother will fall out are apparent at the start of Book 78[77] when the brothers and the consul are supposed to sacrifice to Concord but are unable to find each other and two wolves ascend the Capitol only to be later killed within and without the pomerium (78[77].1.4–6). As his crimes progress, Caracalla frequently consults the gods even while abroad, dispatching couriers with prayers, votives and sacrifices and even visiting shrines in person, and summoning ghosts: Dio records that not one god responds to him and ghosts he summons turn out to be a silent Severus bringing Geta with him, a Severus alone warning him that he will pay for his brother's death, and Commodus warning him that he will pay for his father's (78[77].15.4–5).[41] He consults birth charts and murders those he determines to be threats (79[78].2.1), and appears strangely prescient, uttering oracles hinting at his demise which among other prodigies move Dio to astonishment (78[77].16.8; 79[78].7.1); meanwhile, Rome is warned through other channels (a fire in the Alexandrian temple of Serapis at 79[78].7.3–4 and another instance of simultaneous chanting at 78[77].7.1). Prodigies appear during Macrinus' reign – monstrous births, earthquakes, bees in the Forum Boarium, blood issuing from a pipe, thunderbolts kindling an unquenchable fire in the Colosseum and the Tiber overflowing its banks all signal disaster, materializing in defeat in Mesopotamia (79[78].25.1–26.1), followed by internal conflict from the soldiers

41 On Caracalla's religious travels and consultations, see Rowan 2012, 100–163.

which appears to Dio as having been indicated in advance by a solar eclipse and two comets; what follows is the uprising that slays Macrinus and establishes Elagabalus in his stead (79[78].30.1)[42]; the celestial signals refer not to Macrinus' fate (personally delivered by an oracle of Zeus Belus at 79[78].40.4) but to the coming disaster of the new young emperor. Three years later the death of that appalling young emperor and the ascension of Severus Alexander is not the subject of desperate signaling by the heavens so far as the account in Dio extends. Subtle hints from Dio to the young emperor that he follow an institutionally guided path rather than one centred on the cult of personality may indeed be present; absent are heaven-sent portents signaling that disaster is imminent.[43] Thus it is perhaps on a note of cautious optimism that he is able to conclude his history with mention of his retirement to Bithynia after one consular year, with Zeus leading Hector away from the slaying, blood and uproar of which his history is replete (80.5.3).

5 Conclusion

> *Nescimus credere caelo.*
>
> MANILIUS *Astronomica* 1.905

Commenting on Dio's distinctive approach to an unruly ten centuries of Roman history, Adam Kemezis draws attention to Dio's emphasis on the continuity of Roman governmental forms, creating a contrast "between the contingent world of rulers and events on the one hand, and on the other what Dio posits as the constant underlying realities."[44] I would argue that the heavens constitute one such reality. In contrast to the human sphere, the heavens never fail: Their concern, their agency, runs throughout the narrative like a continuous thread. Dio's signs function as constant and insistent reminders of risk, of the need to self-regulate and to adhere to institutional forms of government, as well as of a divine constancy that helps to connect, frame and control Dio's narrative.

Dio's deployment of various forms of prodigies is a distinctive feature of his history, reflecting a structural opposition between heavenly support for a timeless, transcendent Rome on the one hand and a contingent world of human frailty, greed and presumption on the other. Collectively they constitute a

42 For discussion of this passage see Bertolazzi in this volume.

43 See Pownall in this volume.

44 Kemezis 2014, 18.

thematic and operational pattern that opposes micro and macro, individual and state, human and divine, transitory and eternal. Perhaps there is more to Zeus leading Hector from the fray than we might think.

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PART 3

Literary Heritage

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CHAPTER 12

The Novel World of Cassius Dio

Brandon Jones

During "the long second century" in which Cassius Dio was preparing his *Roman History*, Mediterranean readers were engaging with an additional genre of narrative prose. Though it lacked a standard name in antiquity,[1] what we now call the ancient novel must have been identifiable by its repetitive structural, rhetorical and fantastical characteristics, including preoccupation with banditry, mistaken identity and supernatural forces amidst jeremiad-inducing journeys. Dio's *Roman History* sometimes displays such narrative modes and motifs. The variety and abundance of shared interests and interactions between the novelists and Dio remind us how ancient literature does not always map smoothly onto our own conceptions of genre. Yet they also reveal a senatorial historiographer's vision of the political, social and cultural climate of his own time. What we may conceive of as attributes of genre, Dio deployed as attributes of a period in Roman history. That is, he sometimes captures the spirit of a surreal age of "iron and rust" by means of narrative modes that highlight his personal experience with destabilization.

1 Periodization and Literary Milieu

Cassius Dio was born in the 160s CE and lived at least until 230.[2] While the dating of his composition is debated, it has been reasonably posited that he composed his *Roman History* in the 200s and 210s with additions, revisions and contemporary material added thereafter.[3] It is during this period that many place the *floruit* of the so-called Second Sophistic – a term created by Dio's

1 On ancient terms associated with the novel, see Reardon 1989, 8–9; Holzberg 1995, 8; 2003, 15. The author thanks Adam Kemezis, Colin Bailey, and Beatrice Poletti for their immense generosity both in conference organization and in thoughtful editing, and to an anonymous reader for additional insights. I am also grateful to my former teachers, Werner Riess, who once upon a time introduced me to both Cassius Dio and the ancient novel, and Catherine Connors, who encouraged me to continue reading the two together.

2 On Dio's career, see Molin 2016; Letta 2019; Kuhn in this volume.

3 Kemezis 2014, 282–283.

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contemporary and, perhaps, acquaintance, Flavius Philostratus.[4] One part of the literary boom associated with the Second Sophistic comes in the form of the Greek novel.

Based on scanty evidence and in accordance with the *communis opinio*, the five extant canonical Greek novels might have come into existence on the following timeline: Chariton's *Callirhoe* is often accepted as the earliest, dating between Nero's and Hadrian's reigns (54–138 CE).[5] Xenophon of Ephesus' *Anthia and Habrocomes* or *Ephesiaca* perhaps follows with a *terminus post quem* of Augustus' assumption of power around 31 BCE and *ante quem* of 263 CE; the second century is the *communis opinio*.[6] Papyri from the late second century CE establish a firm *terminus ante quem* for Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, while some internal evidence suggests a Hadrianic *terminus post quem*.[7] Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* holds the least secure date, but some scholars estimate a Severan dating (193–235 CE) and mid-second to mid-third century falls within the *communis opinio*.[8] Heliodorus' *Charicleia* or *Aethiopica* is almost as uncertain and may rest anywhere between 217 and 400 CE, with some placing it before and others after the reign of Julian I (361–363 CE).[9] When approximate dating has been possible with fragmentary novels, several have been associated with the Second Sophistic: Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca* during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE), Antonius Diogenes' *Wonders beyond Thule* as no later than the middle of the third century.[10] As nebulous as our dates are, we can be fairly confident that both Dio and these Greek novelists were working in or around the culture generally accepted as the Second Sophistic. In some cases, it is quite possible that they were working at the very same time as one another.

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4 For a recent survey of the Second Sophistic, see Richter & Johnson 2017. On Dio's relationship with Second Sophistic culture, see Jones 2016; Asirvatham 2017, 485–486. On Dio's potential acquaintance with Philostratus, see Moscovich 2004; Kemezis 2014, 19; Jones 2016, 304–305.

5 For a Neronian date, see Reardon 2003, 313–317 and 325n34; Tilg 2010. On later dates, see Jones 1992, 165; Ruiz-Montero 1994, 489; Morgan 2017, 389–391.

6 See Kytzler 2003, 346–348; Morgan 2017, 398–399. Cf. O'Sullivan 2014, 48–53.

7 Chew 2014, 63–65. See also Holzberg 1995, 87; Plepelits 2003, 388–389.

8 Reardon 1989, 5; Bowie 2003b; Sidebottom 2007, 62. See further Hunter 2003, 369.

9 For discussion and dating *c.*350–375 CE, see Bowersock 1994, 149–155; Futre-Pinheiro 2014, 76–77. Holzberg (1995, 103) offers an earlier date, Morgan 2003, 419 a later one, and Bowie 2003a, 93 leaves the date open.

10 On the *Babyloniaca*, see Holzberg 1995, 85–86. Porphyrius of Tyre knew of Diogenes' work. See Bowie 2003a, 104.

Sometimes we can surmise cross-generic readings by Second Sophistic authors. To name a few, Philostratus (*Ep*. 66) knew Chariton's work.[11] Florus' and Appian's organizational strategies are similar to Chariton's.[12] Dio may have used Philostratus' quasi-novelistic *Apollonius* as a source.[13] Achilles Tatius', Heliodorus' and Lollianus' bandit tales resonate with Dio's *Boukoloi* narrative.[14] The author of the *Historia Augusta* may have been a reader of Heliodorus.[15] Julian (*Ep*. 89, 301B), either a source for or reader of Heliodorus, complained about novelistic writing.[16] Macrobius (*In Somn*. 1.2.7–8) would eventually discuss the Latin novel as a distinct genre.[17] Notably, if unreliably, the *Suda* (Ξ 50 Adler) records Xenophon of Ephesus as a historian and attributes biographical-historical memorabilia to Achilles Tatius (A 4695 Adler).[18] There appears, then, to be some amount of mutual literary awareness among authors of fiction and non-fiction and, perhaps, even cross-over in literary invocation.

2 Novel (Ethno)geography

It should come as little surprise that, along with mutual dates and potential interactive readings and job titles, there are further shared literary interests between authors of the novel and of history.[19] For example, in early and speculative analyses of the novel and of the Second Sophistic, Erwin Rohde (1876) and Eduard Schwartz (1896) read the development of the novel as rooted in travel tales. Four of the five extant Greek novels do, in fact, explore the Mediterranean world through the elaborate journeys of their protagonists.[20] One summative example of the novelistic journey is provided by Anthia, the

11 See Ruiz-Montero 2003, 33; Bowie 2003a, 102.
12 See Kemezis 2020b.
13 See Murison 1999, 270.
14 Discussed further below and by Allen in this volume.
15 See Bowersock 1994, 149–160; Bowie 2003a, 93.
16 See Holzberg 2003, 17.
17 See Holzberg 2003, 15.
18 See Sidebottom 2007, 60.
19 Interactions between historiography and the novel abound. For a comparative survey, see Morgan 2007; Stephens 2003; 2014, 149–151 on fragmentary novels. Historians who used what we might call cross-generic narrative modes would have influenced Dio. On several instances of potential influence relevant to this study, see Lachenaud 2003.
20 See Alvares 2003 for illustrative maps of protagonists' travels in the novels. See Romm 2008 for a survey of travel in the novels.

heroine of Xenophon of Ephesus' novel. In a typical reunion scene at the novel's end, she defends her chastity as follows (Xen. Ephes. 5.14):

> ἀλλ' ἥκω σοι τοιαύτη, τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς Ἀβροκόμη δέσποτα, οἵα τὸ πρῶτον ἀπηλλάγην εἰς Συρίαν ἐκ Τύρου· ἔπεισε δέ με ἁμαρτεῖν οὐδείς, οὐ Μοῖρις ἐν Συρίᾳ, οὐ Περίλαος ἐν Κιλικίᾳ, οὐκ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Ψάμμις καὶ Πολύιδος, οὐκ Ἀγχίαλος ἐν Αἰθιοπίᾳ, οὐκ ἐν Τάραντι ὁ δεσπότης.
>
> I have reached you, Habrocomes, lord of my heart, the same as when I first left you in Tyre for Syria. No one persuaded me to go astray: not Moeris in Syria, Perilaus in Cilicia, Psammis or Polyidus in Egypt, not Anchialus in Ethiopia, not my master in Tarentum.[21]

Like most writers of geography (and protagonists of novels), Anthia has traversed a good portion of the Mediterranean. Yet, unlike a geographer, Anthia does not undertake her journey in order to inform an audience. The places visited – often described imprecisely throughout the novel – serve to illustrate her suffering during an enforced tour.[22]

Autopsy's contribution to authorial merit meant that historiographers often became geographers and travel writers too.[23] Cassius Dio is not alien to that historiographical tradition,[24] but his travelogues, like those of the novels, provide as much information about his personal experience as they do about the regions visited.[25] His travels – no less extensive and convoluted than those of the novels' protagonists – begin with the unpleasant reign of Caracalla and carry through the rocky reigns of Macrinus, Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, indicating some sense of travel as dutiful travail (Table 12.1).[26]

21 Translations of the novels follow Reardon 1989 with occasional modification. Translation of Dio follows Cary 1914–1927 with occasional modification.

22 On Xenophon's geographical imprecision, see Henderson 2009, 203.

23 See Marincola 1997, 63–86.

24 See Coltelloni-Trannoy 2018; Bertrand 2020.

25 On Dio's self-centered motives in the contemporary books, see Davenport 2012, 799; Scott 2018b, 232. As Schmidt (1997, 2625) and Andrews (2019, 113) note, Dio's autobiographical practices are unique among historiographers.

26 On the places and dates of Dio's travels, see Markov 2016; Molin 2016, 445–446; Scott 2018a, 1 and 149; Allen and Kuhn in this volume.

TABLE 12.1 Dio's travels (214–230 CE)

Region	Year	Book	Office
Nicomedia	214	78[77].17.3; 79[78].8.4	
Rome	218	79[78].38.1	
Pergamum & Smyrna	219/221	80[79].7.4	Curator
Bithynia	219/221	80.1.2–3	
Africa	220/3	49.36.4; 80.1.2–3	Proconsul
Italy	220/3	80.1.2–3	
Dalmatia	222/224–6	49.36.4; 80.1.2–3	Legate
Upper Pannonia	223/5/6–225/7/8	49.36.4; 80.1.2–3	Legate
Rome	229	80.1.2–3	Consul
Capua	230	77.2.1; 80.1.2–3	
Nicaea	230	80.1.2–3	

Much of the travel is reported at the end of Dio's *History* in a summative section that presents the culmination of travel with a *nostos* as marked by οἴκαδε (80[80].1.2–3)[27]:

> ἔκ τε γὰρ τῆς Ἀσίας ἐς τὴν Βιθυνίαν ἐλθὼν ἠρρώστησα, κἀκεῖθεν πρὸς τὴν ἐν τῇ Ἀφρικῇ ἡγεμονίαν ἠπείχθην, ἐπανελθών τε ἐς τὴν Ἰταλίαν εὐθέως ὡς εἰπεῖν ἔς τε τὴν Δελματίαν κἀντεῦθεν ἐς τὴν Παννονίαν τὴν ἄνω ἄρξων ἐπέμφθην, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτ' ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην καὶ ἐς τὴν Καμπανίαν ἀφικόμενος παραχρῆμα οἴκαδε ἐξωρμήθην.
>
> After going from Asia into Bithynia, I fell sick, and from there I hastened to my province of Africa; then, on returning to Italy I was almost immediately sent as governor first to Dalmatia and then to Upper Pannonia, and though after that I returned to Rome and Campania, I at once set out for home.

27 On Dio as performer of a Homeric *nostos*, see Scott 2018a, 152–153. This passage, along with several others discussed below, is preserved in the epitome of Xiphilinus. The information and the narrative choices in such preserved pieces can reasonably be expected in Dio's original composition. We cannot, however, know what we are missing. When preservation or lack of it may affect my argument, I have recognized as much. On Xiphilinus, see Mallan 2013. On interpreting later books which are heavily reliant on epitome, see Kemezis 2020a, 259–260.

While there are a few cursory geographic digressions elsewhere in which Dio deploys knowledge obtained from his travels, his travelogue emphasizes the autobiographical, not the geographical, in a manner that aligns more closely with the novels' protagonists than with any previous historiographer.

Related theories on the novel's origin draw upon similarities between the novel and the ethnogeography prevalent in Hellenistic historiography.[28] The titles by which readers came to know many novels are revealing in their own right: *Aethiopica*, *Babyloniaca*, *Ephesiaca*, *Phoenicica*.[29] Those assigning these titles – the novelists Heliodorus and Lollianus, the author of the *Suda* and Iamblichus' epitomator, Photius – may have viewed such narratives as tied to places and peoples. Ethnological and geographical digressions occur in the novel, but in contrast to such pieces in the work of an ethnogeographer such as, say, Strabo, the goal of the novelist seems less to be the perpetuation of knowledge on a topic. Rather, such digressions – aside from ecphrastic flourish – demonstrate characters' self-interest. Achilles Tatius' novel provides an example. As the protagonist Clitophon falls into the hands of brigands on the Nile, he describes the physical and linguistic attributes of the native *Boukoloi* (Ach. Tat. 3.9).[30] The ethnographic ecphrasis is striking but relatively cursory. The 42-word ethnography gives way to a woeful soliloquy of nearly 200 words during which third-person pronouns yield to those of the first person, and the self-centered interests behind Clitophon's ethnography become clear: he feels danger because he cannot negotiate with the Egyptian *Boukoloi* as he would with Greek bandits (Ach. Tat. 3.10).

As with the novel, historiography intersects with ethnogeography. Their mutual developments can be traced back as far as Hecataeus, Xanthus and Herodotus, and imperial historiographers continued to find poignancy in ethnogeographic digressions.[31] While Dio seems to have made such digressions less frequently and at shorter length than many of his fellow imperial

28 See Hägg 1983, 111–114; 1987; Hunter 1994; Ruiz-Montero 2003, 42–48. Cf. Holzberg 1995, 35–42. It is important to remember, however, that novelistic elements existed in works that preceded the Hellenistic period, such as Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. Interaction rather than influence might, again, be a more accurate descriptor for the relationship between history and novel.

29 The *Suda* (Δ 1239 Adler) similarly attributes ethnographic military narratives to Dio under the titles *Persica* and *Getica*. See Sidebottom 2007, 54. On origins of novels' titles, see Whitmarsh 2005.

30 The *Boukoloi* are a common point of interest between Dio and his novelist contemporaries. See Heliod. *Aeth.* 1.5–6; Phnk. B1 recto; Cass. Dio 72[71].4; HA *Marc.* 21.2 and *Avid. Cass.* 6.7; Winkler 1980; Bowersock 1994, 51–53; McGing 1998; Alston 1999; Rutherford 2000; Allen in this volume.

31 See Fornara 1983, 12–16; Dench 2007; Engels 2007.

historiographers,[32] his sustained digressions are not disinterested – each one (37.17; 40.14; 49.36; 77[76].12) includes first-person reports of autopsy, comparative source work or unique perspective.[33] Certainly, it is within historiography's tradition to display authority by personalized accounts or egonarrative, but it is remarkable that none of Dio's surviving ethnogeographic digressions appears without some degree of first-person narrative. One gets the sense that he finds the information significant and worthwhile not solely for the knowledge that it provides to the reader, but also – and sometimes moreover – because of his personal relationship with or need to express that information.[34] This is best illustrated by his longest digression, which is also his most personal.[35] He interrupts his ethnography of the Pannonians in book 49 with an autobiographical anecdote and family history that far exceeds the necessary proof of historiographical authority (49.36.4):

> ταῦτα δὲ οὐκ ἀκούσας οὐδ' ἀναγνοὺς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔργῳ μαθὼν ὥστε καὶ ἄρξας αὐτῶν, οἶδα· μετὰ γάρ τοι τὴν ἐν τῇ Ἀφρικῇ ἡγεμονίαν τῇ τε Δελματίᾳ, ἧς ποτε καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου χρόνον τινὰ ἦρξε, καὶ τῇ Παννονίᾳ τῇ ἄνω καλουμένῃ προσετάχθην, ὅθεν ἀκριβῶς πάντα τὰ κατ' αὐτοὺς εἰδὼς γράφω.
>
> This I know not from hearsay or reading only, but I have learned it from actual experience as once their governor, for after my command in Africa and in Dalmatia (the latter position my father also held for a time) I was

32 See Bertrand 2016, 712–713. While there is no telling what has been lost, only four extended ethnogeographic digressions survive from Dio's *History*, and even those are relatively brief. For example, Dio's Jewish digression (37.17) totals 176 words, Tacitus' (*Hist.* 5.2–8), 1007. While of uncertain original length, Dio's digression on the Britons (77[76].12) amounts to 260 words in Xiphilinus' surviving text, Tacitus' (*Agr.* 10–13), to 556. On ethnic interactions in the fragments of Dio's early books, see Jones 2018.

33 See Bertrand 2020, 124–125 on Dio's geographical autopsy and research from contemporary documents.

34 See Scott 2018a, 151–152; 2018b, 229.

35 Dio's other digressions also include first-person verbs and pronouns. His discussion of weekdays in the Jewish digression is introduced not only because he has personally heard two explanations (ἤκουσα δὲ δύο λόγους), but, moreover, because he *wants* to write about it (τι περὶ αὐτοῦ διαλεχθῆναι βούλομαι [37.18.2]). Of the Parthians – in his least personal digression – he still uses the first person and notes that he does not have in mind to write generally (ἐγὼ οὐκ ἐν γνώμῃ ποιοῦμαι συγγράψαι), but that he will discuss their weapons because his history has a need for such information (τουτῶν γὰρ ὁ ἐξετασμὸς τῷδε τῷ λόγῳ, ὅτι καὶ ἐς χρείαν αὐτῶν ἀφικνεῖται, προσήκει (40.15.2)). Of the Britons, Dio's contemporaneous writing immediately implies personal attachment, but he also calls the readers' attention to his previous clear discussions (39.50; 66.20) of the island (σαφῶς ὥσπερ εἶπον (77[76].12.5)).

> appointed to what is known as Upper Pannonia, and hence it is with exact knowledge of all conditions among them that I write.

The autobiographical digression accounts for about a quarter of the Pannonian ethnogeography, which could be fairly described as cursory and self-centered. Dio's later discussion (80[80].4.1) of his governorship in Pannonia as the root of his conflict with the Praetorian Guard again amplifies his personal interests.[36] This sort of self-interested ethnogeography has a tint that one sees in the novel – one that may have more rhetorical than historical significance.

3 Novel Rhetoric

As with most works of ancient literature, the presence of advanced rhetoric in Dio's *Roman History* and in each of the ancient novels is clear and abundant.[37] But there are several ways in which Dio and the novelists deploy rhetoric in a manner of their own. One is the use of *consolationes* for the purposes of *ethopoeiai*.[38] An exercise among the *progymnasmata*, *ethopoeiai* developed characters by placing appropriate words in the appropriate mouths. Unsurprisingly, this mode of rhetoric was useful to novelists and historiographers alike. As its name suggests, the *consolatio* provided support and advice during distress. One example appears in the sixth book of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* during which the heroine Charicleia is discovered by Calasiris as she weeps over separation from and the unknown fate of the hero Theagenes. Calasiris begins a consolation of Charicleia with rhetorical questioning, exclamation and censure in which an implicit and retroactive development of her character occurs (Heliod. *Aeth.* 6.9):

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36 Andrews 2019, 47, for example, views the Pannonian digression as a moment when Dio narrates himself as a singular demonstration of senatorial virtue. Parat 2021, 142–145 observes the priority of personal experience and authorial motives and structure over historical detail and source work in Dio's treatment of the Pannonian legions.

37 Studies are ubiquitous and too great to explore in detail here. For bibliography on rhetoric and Cassius Dio, see Jones 2016, 301–302; see also: Fomin 2016; Bellissime 2016; Gotteland 2016; Burden-Strevens 2020. For discussion and bibliography on rhetoric and the novel, see Ruiz-Montero 2003, 65–70; Laird 2008. For discussion and bibliography on rhetoric and historiography, see the contributions of Carey and Ash, among others, in MacDonald 2017.

38 Studies of *ethopoeiai* in the novel have tended towards forensic oratory. See Bartsch 1934; De Temmerman 2009; Doulamis 2011. See Pitcher 2018, 226–227 on Dio as proponent of "show, not tell" historiography. See Porod in this volume on reading the Philiscus *consolatio* as a holistic survey of Cicero's life.

> τί ταῦτα, Χαρίκλεια; τί λίαν οὕτω καὶ ἄμετρα δυσφορεῖς; τί δὲ οὕτως ἐκφρόνως ἥττων γίνῃ τῶν προσπιπτόντων; οὐδέ σε γνωρίζω τὸ παρόν, ἀεὶ γενναίαν καὶ σώφρονα τύχας ἐνεγκεῖν τὸ πρόσθεν ἐγνωκώς. οὐ παύσῃ τῆς ἄγαν ταύτης ἀνοίας; οὐκ ἐννοήσεις ἄνθρωπος οὖσα, πρᾶγμα ἀστάθμητον καὶ ὀξείας ῥοπὰς ἐφ' ἑκάτερα λαμβάνον; τί σαυτὴν προαναιρεῖς βελτιόνων ἴσως ἐλπίδων;
>
> What is the meaning of this, Charicleia? Why this extravagant and unseemly anguish? Why this senseless submission to adversity? Till now I have always admired your stalwart devotion to propriety in the face of circumstances, but now I hardly know you. Please, let us have no more such silliness! Kindly remember that you are a human being, a creature of change, subject to rapid fluctuations of fortune for good or for ill. So why hasten yourself to an untimely death when possibly a brighter future awaits you?

Consolationes can come in the form of diatribes, treatises and epistles, but a dialogic *consolatio* suits the novel particularly well.[39] In this instance, Charicleia participates in the dialogue and replies to Calasiris thus (Heliod. *Aeth.* 6.9):

> ἀληθῆ μὲν ἐπιτιμᾷς, ἀλλ' ἴσως ἐμοὶ συγγνωστά, ὦ πάτερ· οὐ γάρ με δημώδης οὐδὲ νεωτερίζουσά τις ἐπιθυμία πρὸς ταῦτα ἐξάγει τὴν ἀθλίαν ἀλλὰ καθαρός τε καὶ σωφρονῶν ἀπειράτου μὲν ἀλλ' ἔμοιγε ἀνδρὸς πόθος καὶ τούτου Θεαγένους.
>
> Your censure is well-founded, father, but perhaps I may be forgiven; for it is no depraving desire such as ordinary people feel that makes me act as I did in my distress, but rather a pure and chaste longing for one who, in my eyes, is nonetheless my husband for never having consummated our love, for a man of Theagenes' quality.

Charicleia's reply is not only an essential part of her *ethopoeia*, but it also presses back against Calasiris' *consolatio* – a feature that, difficult to create within other forms of consolation, might be expected in dialogue. In other words, the dialogic *consolatio* opens itself up to internal criticism of its own practice and privileges the supposedly special circumstance of the suffering respondent.

Dio was, perhaps, aware of this effect when he fashioned a dialogic *consolatio ad exulem* that is not quite like anything produced by other historiographers.

39 See Claassen 1996, 31 for survey of these forms with special attention paid to Cassius Dio's practice.

Dio's Philiscus begins his consolation of the exiled Cicero in a manner not dissimilar to that of Heliodorus' Calasiris (Cass. Dio 38.18.1):[40]

> "οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ," ἔφη, "ὦ Κικέρων, θρηνῶν καὶ γυναικείως διακείμενος; ὡς ἔγωγε οὔποτ᾽ ἄν σε προσεδόκησα οὕτω μαλακισθήσεσθαι, πολλῆς μὲν παιδείας καὶ παντοδαπῆς μετεσχηκότα, πολλοῖς δὲ καὶ συνηγορηκότα."
>
> Are you not ashamed, Cicero, to be weeping and behaving like a woman? Really, I should never have expected that you, who have enjoyed such an excellent and varied education, and who have acted as an advocate to many, would grow so faint-hearted.

The character evaluation implicit in Philiscus' consolation is even sharper than that of Calasiris. Cicero's reply, in turn, is sharper than that of Charicleia and extends beyond his own situation to reject the entire practice of the *consolatio* (Cass. Dio 38.18.2):

> ἀλλ᾽ οὐδέν τοι ὅμοιόν ἐστιν, ὦ Φιλίσκε, ὑπὲρ ἄλλων τέ τινα λέγειν καὶ ἑαυτῷ συμβουλεύειν. τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων λεγόμενα, ἀπὸ ὀρθῆς καὶ ἀδιαφθόρου τῆς γνώμης προϊόντα, καιρὸν ἐς τὰ μάλιστα λαμβάνει· ὅταν δὲ δὴ πάθημά τι τὴν ψυχὴν καταλάβῃ, θολοῦται καὶ σκοτοῦται καὶ οὐδὲν δύναται καίριον ἐννοῆσαι. ὅθεν που πάνυ καλῶς εἴρηται ὅτι ῥᾷον παραινέσαι ἑτέροις ἐστὶν ἢ αὐτὸν παθόντα καρτερῆσαι.
>
> But it is not at all the same thing, Philiscus, to speak for others as to advise one's self. The words spoken on others' behalf, proceeding from a mind that is firm and unshaken, are most opportune; but when some affliction overwhelms the spirit, it becomes turbid and darkened and cannot reason out anything that is opportune. For this reason, I suppose, it has been very well said that it is easier to counsel others than to be strong oneself under suffering.

The basis for Cicero's rejection of the *consolatio* as a practice is that one cannot fully understand another's personal state of mind and emotion. His argument for the uniqueness of the self runs a similar course to that of Charicleia. The personal application for Dio, though not immediately apparent, may

40 On Cicero and Philiscus, see further Millar 1964, 49–51; Claassen 1996; Gowing 1998; Rees 2011, 164–180; Kemezis 2014, 289–290; Montecalvo 2014, 231–282; Keeline 2018, 171–177; Welch 2019, 105–106; Burden-Strevens 2020; Kemezis and Porod in this volume.

parallel his self-centered deployment of ethnogeography. That is, if we accept the theory that Dio's final trip to Nicaea was an enforced exile and that the Cicero-Philiscus *consolatio ad exulem* was an anachronistic insert, this exchange placed in 58 BCE in the *Roman History* equally applies to Dio himself in 230 CE.[41]

4 Novel Invocation

Whether understood as an exile or a homecoming, Dio caps his flight to Nicaea (and his *Roman History*) with a Homeric quotation (Cass. Dio 80[80].5.3):[42]

> ὄναρ γάρ ποτε ἔδοξα προστάσσεσθαι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ προσγράψασθαι τῷ ἀκροτελευτίῳ τὰ ἔπη τάδε, Ἕκτορα δ' ἐκ βελέων ὕπαγε Ζεὺς ἔκ τε κονίης ἔκ τ' ἀνδροκτασίης ἔκ θ' αἵματος ἔκ τε κυδοιμοῦ.
>
> For once in a dream, I thought I was commanded by it to write at the close of my work these verses: "Hector did Zeus lead forth out of range of the missiles, out of the dust and the slaying of men, out of the blood and the uproar."

A dream, then, guided Dio's hand in closing his work. Indeed, dreams and portents feature throughout the *Roman History*, often as markers of good and bad fortune or in accompaniment with major events such as shifts in reign.[43] Dio's expectation of such signals can be summarized rather well using one of his

41 See further Millar 1964, 19–20; Berrigan 1966; Fechner 1986, 49–50; Gowing 1998, 377–378; Hose 2007, 467; Kemezis 2014, 289–290; Scott 2018b, 247; Peer 2020, 237–238; Kemezis in this volume.

42 See Hom. *Il.* 11.163–164. On this and other Homeric quotations and allusions in Dio, see Bering-Staschewski 1981, 126–127; Burden-Strevens 2015; Jones 2016, 300–301; Scott 2018b, 230. Homeric allusion is not unusual in the Greek novel – consider, e.g., the structure of Heliodorus' novel (Hägg 1983, 54; Morgan 2003, 436), the 27 Homeric quotations in Chariton's (Holzberg 1995, 48; Reardon 2003, 333) or the meaningful use of Homeric names in Xenophon's (Kytzler 2003, 355).

43 See Boissevain 1896 vol. 4; Schmidt 1997, 2613–2618 and 1999, 99; Marincola 1997, 83; Freyburger-Galland 1999; Swan 2004, 8–13; Gleason 2011; Langford 2013, 55–63; Scott 2018a, 7–8 and 41–42; Andrews 2019, 90–92, Baron 2021; and in this volume Stewart, along with Bertolazzi, Allen, and Kuhn. While there are elements unique to Dio (as discussed below), prophetic omens appear across the historiographical tradition. For a survey, see Pelling 1997.

own examples. Amidst controversy over the death of Marcellus and a plague-stricken year, Dio comments on portents (Cass. Dio 53.33.5):

> καὶ φιλεῖ γάρ πως ἀεί τι πρὸ τῶν τοιούτων προσημαίνεσθαι, τότε μὲν λύκος τε ἐν τῷ ἄστει συνελήφθη, καὶ πῦρ χειμών τε πολλοῖς οἰκοδομήμασιν ἐλυμήνατο, ὅ τε Τίβερις αὐξηθεὶς τήν τε γέφυραν τὴν ξυλίνην κατέσυρε καὶ τὴν πόλιν πλωτὴν ἐπὶ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἐποίησε.
>
> And, just as it usually happens that some sign occurs before such events, so on this occasion a wolf was caught in the city, fire and storm damaged many buildings, and the Tiber, rising, carried away the wooden bridge and made the city navigable for boats during three days.

Of note here are Dio's first words: καὶ φιλεῖ γάρ πως ἀεί, where the φιλεῖ and the ἀεί hammer home the confidence Dio has in such omens.

The supernatural generally serves as a herald or companion of twists in the "plot" of Dio's *History*, but in one exceptional case it plays not the role of announcer, but of catalyst when dreams inspire Dio to write his *History* (Cass. Dio 73[72].23):[44]

> πόλεμοι δὲ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ στάσεις μέγισται συνέβησαν, συνέθηκα δ᾽ ἐγὼ τούτων τὴν συγγραφὴν ἐξ αἰτίας τοιᾶσδε. βιβλίον τι περὶ τῶν ὀνειράτων καὶ τῶν σημείων δι᾽ ὧν ὁ Σεουῆρος τὴν αὐτοκράτορα ἀρχὴν ἤλπισε, γράψας ἐδημοσίευσα· καὶ αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκεῖνος πεμφθέντι παρ᾽ ἐμοῦ ἐντυχὼν πολλά μοι καὶ καλὰ ἀντεπέστειλε. ταῦτ᾽ οὖν ἐγὼ τὰ γράμματα πρὸς ἑσπέραν ἤδη λαβὼν κατέδαρθον, καί μοι καθεύδοντι προσέταξε τὸ δαιμόνιον ἱστορίαν γράφειν. καὶ οὕτω δὴ ταῦτα περὶ ὧν νῦν καθίσταμαι ἔγραψα. καὶ ἐπειδή γε τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ αὐτῷ τῷ Σεουήρῳ μάλιστα ἤρεσε, τότε δὴ καὶ τἆλλα πάντα τὰ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις προσήκοντα συνθεῖναι ἐπεθύμησα· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐκέτι ἰδίᾳ ἐκεῖνο ὑπολιπεῖν ἀλλ᾽ ἐς τήνδε τὴν συγγραφὴν ἐμβαλεῖν ἔδοξέ μοι, ἵν᾽ ἐν μιᾷ πραγματείᾳ ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς πάντα, μέχρις ἂν καὶ τῇ Τύχῃ δόξῃ, γράψας καταλίπω. τὴν δὲ δὴ θεὸν ταύτην ἐπιρρωννύουσάν με πρὸς τὴν ἱστορίαν εὐλαβῶς πρὸς αὐτὴν καὶ ὀκνηρῶς διακείμενον, καὶ πονούμενον ἀπαγορεύοντά τε ἀνακτωμένην δι᾽ ὀνειράτων, καὶ καλὰς ἐλπίδας περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος χρόνου διδοῦσάν μοι ὡς ὑπολειψομένου τὴν

44 See Freyburger-Galland 1999, 538 on the literary tradition of invocation to write via dreams. Notably, however, such invocations never appear in a work of historiography, the closest instance being a report from Pliny the Younger's *Epistle* 3.5 about his uncle's call to history. A similar instance pushes Dio to continue his *History* (79[78].10), on which see Andrews 2019, 90–92.

> ἱστορίαν καὶ οὐδαμῶς ἀμαυρώσοντος, ἐπίσκοπον τῆς τοῦ βίου διαγωγῆς, ὡς ἔοικεν, εἴληχα, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐτῇ ἀνάκειμαι.
>
> After this, there occurred most violent wars and civil strife. I was inspired to write an account of these struggles by the following incident. I had written and published a little book about the dreams and portents which gave Severus reason to hope for the imperial power; and he, after reading the copy I sent him, wrote me a long and complimentary acknowledgment. This letter I received about nightfall, and soon after fell asleep; and in my dreams, the divine power (*daemon*) commanded me to write history. Thus, it was that I came to write the narrative with which I am at this moment concerned. And inasmuch as it won the high approval, not only of others but, in particular, of Severus himself, I then conceived a desire to compile a record of everything else that concerned the Romans. Therefore, I decided to leave the first treatise no longer as a separate composition, but to incorporate it in this present history, in order that in a single work I might write down and leave behind me a record of everything from the beginning down to the point that shall seem best to fortune (*tuche*). This goddess gives me the strength to continue my history when I become timid and disposed to shrink from it; when I grow weary and would resign the task, she wins me back by sending dreams; she inspires me with fair hopes that future time will permit my history to survive and never dim its lustre; she, it seems, has fallen to my lot as guardian of the course of my life, and therefore I have dedicated myself to her.

We might note not only that Dio is the author of a dream book and is visited by a *daemon* in his sleep, but that *tuche* continues to drive his work forward, acting as a patroness to whom Dio dedicates himself.[45] Of course, *tuche* is a motif in the world described by many Greek historiographers, but Dio uniquely presents it as a personal – as opposed to universal – driving force.[46]

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45 For varying interpretations of *tuche* in Dio, see Rubin 1980, 42–53; Marincola 1997, 47–51; Schmidt 1999, 99; Kuhn-Chen 2002, 210–213; Kemezis in this volume. Andrews 2019, 91 argues that tying consequent and concrete *erga* to a dream is wholly "un-Thucydidean".

46 Polybius provides the most robust, if complicated, deployment of *tuche* as an historical motif; yet, I know of no study that frames Polybius' *tuche* as operational at a level besides the universal and the general, as opposed to the individual and specific. See Hau 2011 for a summary of scholarship (183–186) and tables (195; 200–202) categorizing Polybius' references to *tuche* – none of which approach the personal usage later deployed by Dio.

It is similarly characteristic of the Greek novel that the supernatural works on the individual protagonists to drive the plot.[47] Examples abound and traces can be seen broadly through lexica: *Leucippe and Clitophon* alone includes 60 instances of τύχη, while ὄναρ appears 30 times in the *Aethiopica*, δαίμων 17 times in *Callirhoe*. The briefest of the extant novels, *Anthia and Habrocomes*, does not reach such numbers, but rather has an oracle telegraph the plot once and for all. Xenophon of Ephesus' novel introduces its protagonists as ill with *eros*. After diviners and priests have accomplished nothing, an oracle of Apollo at Colophon, albeit in typically elusive fashion, prophesizes as follows (Xen. Ephes. 1.6–7):

> "τίπτε ποθεῖτε μαθεῖν νούσου τέλος ἠδὲ καὶ ἀρχήν; ἀμφοτέρους μία νοῦσος ἔχει, λύσις ἔνθεν ἀνέστη. δεινὰ δ ὁρῶ τοῖσδεσσι πάθη καὶ ἀνήνυτα ἔργα: ἀμφότεροι φεύξονται ὑπεὶρ ἅλα λυσσοδίωκτοι, δεσμὰ δὲ μοχθήσουσι παρ᾽ ἀνδράσι μιξοθαλάσσοις καὶ τάφος ἀμφοτέροις θάλαμος καὶ πῦρ ἀΐδηλον, καὶ ποταμοῦ Νείλου παρὰ ῥεύμασιν Ἴσιδι σεμνῇ σωτείρῃ μετόπισθε παραστῆς ὄλβια δῶρα. ἀλλ᾽ ἔτι που μετὰ πήματ᾽ ἀρείονα πότμον ἔχουσι [...]." ἔδοξεν οὖν αὐτοῖς πολλὰ βουλευσαμένοις παραμυθήσασθαι τὸν χρησμὸν ὡς οἷόν τε καὶ συζεῦξαι γάμῳ τοὺς παῖδας, ὡς τοῦτο καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ βουλομένου δι᾽ ὧν ἐμαντεύσατο. ἐδόκει δὴ ταῦτα καὶ διέγνωσαν μετὰ τὸν γάμον ἐκπέμψαι χρόνῳ τινὶ ἀποδημήσοντας αὐτούς.
>
> "Why do you long to learn the end of a malady and its beginning? One disease has both in its grasp, and from that, the remedy must be accomplished. But for them I see terrible sufferings and toils that are endless; both will flee over the sea pursued by madness; they will suffer chains at the hands of men who mingle with the waters; and a tomb shall be the burial chamber for both, and fire the destroyer; and beside the waters of the river Nile, to Holy Isis the savior you will afterwards offer rich gifts; but still after their sufferings, a better fate is in store [...]." They decided after a great deal of deliberation to palliate the oracle as far as they could and marry the pair since the god implied by his prophecy that this was his will too. They decided this and determined to send them on a trip abroad for a time after their marriage.

Not only does the oracle announce the plot, but it also drives it, because the fathers, though they did not know what any of the oracles meant, marry the couple and send them on a trip. Absence of logic aside, the story unfolds

47 See further Reardon 1989, 9; Bowersock 1994, 86–93; MacAlister 1996; Morgan 2003, 444.

according to and because of an oracle and its interpretation. To be sure, dreams and fate also play their role along the way. As the couple sets out on their journey, a vision comes to Habrocomes of a woman setting fire to their ship. "As soon as he dreamt this, he was in a panic and expected his dream to portend some dreadful outcome, as indeed it did" (Xen. Ephes. 1.12.4: ταῦτα ὡς εὐθὺς εἶδεν ἐταράχθη καὶ προσεδόκα τι δεινὸν ἐκ τοῦ ὀνείρατος· καὶ τὸ δεινὸν ἐγένετο). After the ship catches fire and the protagonists are captured, the pirate Euxinus frames Habrocomes' state within the realm of *tuche* and *daimonia* in a manner that resembles Dio's dedication to the goddess of fortune: "But you must put everything down to fortune and accept the divine power that rules over you (Xen. Ephes. 1.16.3: δεῖ δέ σε τῇ τύχῃ πάντα λογίσασθαι καὶ στέργειν τὸν κατέχοντα δαίμονα). And so follows the main action of the novel, announced by dreams and driven by fortune in a way not dissimilar to Dio's call to history.[48]

5 Novel Characters

Additional plot-drivers in the world of the novel include banditry and piracy, so much so that some have deemed them integral to the genre.[49] They can also be dynamic representatives of an authorial voice. One instantiation of this phenomenon is illustrated by the novels' bandit counter-governments. Achilles Tatius' *Boukoloi* provide an example with their quasi-monarchical constitution, as Clitophon reports that after his capture by these bandits, "they would bring us to their king; for they call their bandit leader by this name" (Ach. Tat. 3.9: ἄξοντες ἡμᾶς εἰς τὸν βασιλέα· τούτῳ γὰρ ἐκάλουν τῷ ὀνόματι τὸν λῃστὴν τὸν μείζονα). Heliodorus' *Boukoloi* have built a fatherland that simultaneously affirms and subverts Greco-Roman society (Heliod. *Aeth*. 1.5–6):

> ἐπ' αὐτοῦ μὲν αὐτοῖς αἱ γυναῖκες ἐριθεύουσιν, ἐπ' αὐτοῦ δὲ ἀποτίκτουσιν. εἰ δὲ γένοιτο παιδίον, τὰ μὲν πρῶτα τῷ μητρῴῳ γάλακτι τὰ δὲ ἀπὸ τούτου τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς λίμνης ἰχθύσι πρὸς ἥλιον ὀπτωμένοις ἐκτρέφει [...] καί πού τις βουκόλος ἀνὴρ ἐτέχθη τε ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ καὶ τροφὸν ἔσχε ταύτην καὶ πατρίδα τὴν λίμνην ἐνόμισεν· ἱκανὴ δὲ φρούριον ἰσχυρὸν εἶναι λῃσταῖς· διὸ καὶ συρρεῖ ἐπ' αὐτὴν ὁ

48 Freyburger-Galland 1999, 534 underscores the influence that the orators of the Second Sophistic may have had on Dio's conception of the supernatural. That same influence likely worked on the contemporaneous novelists.

49 E.g., "no ancient Greek novel story is complete without an encounter with pirates" (Chew 2014, 69); the bandit is a "type of character designed by the ancient novelists" (Billault 2003, 120). See also Reardon 1989, 9; Scarcella 2003, 242–243 and 250–251; Plepelits 2003, 409; Chew 2014, 69; Futre-Pinheiro 2014, 78–79.

> τοιοῦτος βίος τῷ μὲν ὕδατι πάντες ὅσα τείχει χρώμενοι, τὸν δὲ πολὺν κατὰ τὸ ἕλος κάλαμον ἀντὶ χαρακώματος προβεβλημένοι.
>
> On these boats, their womenfolk work at their weaving, on these boats their children are born. Any child born there is fed at first on its mother's milk, later on, fish from the lake dried in the sun [...] Many a *Boukolos* has been born here and reared as I have described, and has come to look upon the lake as his country. It affords a secure stronghold for bandits, and so that class of person flocks there. The water encircles the entire settlement like a wall, and instead of a palisade, they are protected by the vast quantities of reeds growing in the marsh.

Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus offer the *Boukoloi* as counter-societies with which one could almost, but not fully identify. To think of the novel as an escape from reality (perhaps even from the Roman Empire),[50] such social outcasts display an alternative, but one that ultimately becomes grotesquely barbaric – either because they are kidnapping, cannibalizing, or perhaps just not speaking Greek. McGing suggests that these fictive interactions with counter-societies served social purposes:

> This was an important world, where poor people could dream of heroes and protectors who would rescue them from oppression, and the rich and powerful could invent ideologically appropriate figures to challenge, but ultimately reassert the status quo.[51]

Dio reveals a similar fascination with brigandry not so much as a plot-driver but as an anecdote.[52] Though several bandits and rebels appear throughout the *Roman History* – not least the *Boukoloi* – they almost always seem to be the same, suggesting that Richard Alston's (1999) mythic archetype, in fact, exists in both the novel and historiography. Placing selected bandit anecdotes next to Dio's most complete bandit, Bulla Felix, reveals this archetypal framework (Table 12.2).[53]

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50 On the Greek novel as escape from the political world of Rome, see Holzberg 1995, 30–31; Kim 2008, 148. Cf. Connors 2008, 173.

51 McGing 1998, 183. See also Swain 1996, 115 for positive archetypes and Alston 1999, 145–146 for negative archetypes.

52 See Schmidt 2000; Pitcher 2018, 228–230.

53 On Bulla Felix, see also Shaw 1984, 48; Grünewald 2008, 110–136; Gleason 2011, 59.

TABLE 12.2 Dio's bandits

At this period one Bulla, an Italian, got together a robber band of about six hundred men, and for two years continued to plunder Italy under the very noses of the emperors and of a multitude of soldiers. For though he was pursued by many men, and though Severus eagerly followed his trail, he was never really seen when seen, never found when found, never caught when caught, thanks to his great bribes and cleverness [...] In the case of most persons he would take a part of what they had and let them go at once, but he detained artisans for a time and made use of their skill, then dismissed them with a present. Once, when two of his men had been captured and were about to be given to wild beasts, he paid a visit to the keeper of the prison, pretending that he was the governor of his native district and needed some men of such and such a description, and in this way, he secured and saved the men. And he approached the centurion who was trying to exterminate the band and accused himself, pretending to be someone else, and promised, if the centurion would accompany him, to deliver the robber to him. So on the pretext that he was leading him to Felix (this was another name by which he was called), he led him into a defile beset with thickets and easily seized him. Later, he assumed the dress of a magistrate, ascended the tribunal, and having summoned the centurion, caused part of his head to be shaved, and then said: "Carry this message to your masters: 'Feed your slaves, so that they may not turn to brigandage.'" [...] Papinian, the prefect, asked him, "Why did you become a robber?" And he replied: "Why are you a prefect?" Later, after due proclamation, he was given to wild beasts, and his band was broken up – to such an extent did the strength of the whole six hundred lie in him. (Cass. Dio 77[76].10)	*Claudius* While Severus was pluming himself on this achievement, as if he surpassed all mankind in both understanding and bravery, a most incredible thing happened. A certain robber named Claudius, who was overrunning Judaea and Syria and was being very vigorously pursued in consequence, came to him one day with some horsemen, like some military tribune, and saluted and kissed him; and he was neither discovered at the time nor caught later. (Cass. Dio 75.2.4) *Isidorus* The people called the *Boukoloi* began a disturbance in Egypt and under the leadership of one Isidorus, a priest, caused the rest of the Egyptians to revolt. At first, arrayed in women's garments, they had deceived the Roman centurion, causing him to believe that they were women of the *Boukoloi* and were going to give him gold as ransom for their husbands, and had then struck down when he approached them. (Cass. Dio 72[71].4) *Bato* Bato asked nothing for himself, even holding his head forward to await the stroke, but on behalf of the others, he made a long defense. Finally, upon being asked by Tiberius why his people had taken it into their heads to revolt and to war against the Romans so long, he replied: "You Romans are to blame for this; for you send as guardians of your flocks, not dogs or shepherds, but wolves." (Cass. Dio 56.16.3)

In the first paired excerpts comparing Bulla to a certain Claudius, one cannot miss similar invincibility, bolstered by a mastery of disguise and highlighted by a duped and frustrated emperor. Claudius' and Bulla's disguise work is highlighted further in the second paired excerpts, comparing Isidorus and Bulla and showing their ability to dupe Roman officials. In the final paired excerpts, Bulla and Bato show that even when caught, they hold the position of superiority, using sententious retorts to underscore their positions as social bandits. That Bulla seems to be the noble bandit composite of the other three suggests that Dio was capturing a character type in novelistic, not strictly historic, fashion. As Grünewald has put it in his final treatment of Dio's Bulla Felix, "when it came to dealing with bandits Roman historians became novelists."[54]

As Grünewald, Shaw, Gleason and Schmidt have all discussed, Dio's novelist role-playing does not empty such bandit-anecdotes of substance. Bulla becomes part of an anecdote of Severan failure just as the bandit Corocotta becomes a part of an anecdote of Augustan virtue (Cass. Dio 56.43.3).[55] Like the *Boukoloi* of the novels, Bulla presents an alternate government.[56] Whereas Achilles Tatius has a *basileus*, Dio's Bulla seems to be the head of a mock senate. Whereas Heliodorus depicts a mini-society, Dio shows Bulla with a mini-court of artisans. For the historiographer seemingly exasperated by inept emperors and senatorial colleagues, yet making a career within the same imperial system,[57] the alternate world of the bandit and the questions and reaffirmations about the status quo revealed by such a world would be too appealing to leave to the novelists alone.

The world of the bandit presents another paradox in the form of mistaken identity. To this we might add a somewhat related element – apparent deaths (*Scheintode*), insofar as they present a false state of being.[58] In the case of *Leucippe and Clitophon*, three such *Scheintode* occur. In the first, Leucippe appears to have been offered as a human sacrifice to the *Boukoloi* (Ach. Tat. 3.15). But, as Satyros later reports, he and Menelaus planned to use a prop

54 Grünewald 2008, 164. Grünewald's overall claim is that all historians' bandits are a fictive archetype, but his most sustained argument deals with Bulla Felix, illustrating Dio's uniquely abundant treatment of banditry.

55 On Corocotta and Augustus, see further Grünewald 2008, 112; Gleason 2011, 59.

56 On references to Roman government in Dio's tale of Bulla Felix, see Grünewald 2008, 111–112.

57 On Dio's dissatisfaction with the Severan regime, see recently Scott 2015; Madsen 2016; Rantala 2016; Zecchini 2016. On dissatisfaction with contemporary senators, see Davenport 2012, 809; Jones 2016, 313–314; Scott 2018b, 241–248. Cf. Andrews 2019, cautioning against politicized readings drawn from Dio's contemporary books.

58 On *Scheintod* as motif, see Hägg 1983, 33; Holzberg 1995, 50; Schmeling 2003, xxv; Chew 2014, 70.

sword and an animal hide to stage the *Scheintod* and save Leucippe's life (Ach. Tat. 3.21):

> δέρμα προβάτου λαβόντες ὡς ὅτι ῥαδινώτατον συρράψωμεν εἰς σχῆμα βαλαντίου, μέτρον ὅσον γαστρὸς ἀνθρωπίνης, εἶτ᾽ ἐμπλήσαντες θηρείων σπλάγχνων καὶ αἵματος, τὴν πλαστὴν ταύτην γαστέρα ῥάψωμεν, ὡς ἂν μὴ ῥᾳδίως τὰ σπλάγχνα διεκπίπτοι, καὶ ἐνσκευάσαντες τὴν κόρην τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον καὶ στολὴν ἔξωθεν περιβαλόντες μίτραις τε καὶ ζώμασιν ἐνδεδυμένῃ τὴν σκευὴν ταύτην ἐπικρύψωμεν [...] ὁρᾷς τοῦτο τὸ ξίφος ὡς ἔχει μηχανῆς. ἂν γὰρ ἐρείσῃ τις ἐπί τινος σώματος, φεύγει πρὸς τὴν κώπην ὥσπερ εἰς κουλεόν· καὶ οἱ μὲν ὁρῶντες δοκοῦσι βαπτίζεσθαι τὸν σίδηρον κατὰ τοῦ σώματος, ὁ δὲ εἰς τὸν χηραμὸν τῆς κώπης ἀνέδραμε, μόνην δὲ καταλείπει τὴν αἰχμήν, ὅσον τὴν πλαστὴν γαστέρα τεμεῖν.
>
> We take an animal hide, as soft a one as we can find, and sew it into a pouch about the size of a human stomach. Then we fill it with other creatures' bloody entrails and resew the pseudo-stomach tightly enough so the viscera won't drip. We tie it onto the girl and then dress her in an outer garment with sashes and girdles to hide the paraphernalia [...] Now you see this trick sword? If you press it against the body, it retreats into the hilt as into a sheath. The audience believes the blade is penetrating the body, but it actually retires into the recessed hilt, leaving just enough point to cut the deceptive diaphragm.

No stranger to narratives of mistaken identity,[59] Dio also reveals the secrets behind a well-noted *Scheintod* – that of Sextus Condianus. As Commodus puts to death various wealthy and intelligent Quintilii,[60] Sextus Condianus devises the following plot to avoid this fate (Cass. Dio 73[72].6.1–2):

> Κονδιανὸς δὲ Σέξτος ὁ τοῦ Μαξίμου υἱός, φύσει τε καὶ παιδείᾳ τῶν ἄλλων διαφέρων, ἐπειδὴ ᾔσθετο καὶ τῆς ἐς αὐτὸν φερούσης θανατηφόρου ψήφου (διέτριβε δὲ ἐν Συρίᾳ,) αἷμα λαγὼ ἔπιε, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτ᾽ ἐπί τε ἵππον ἀνέβη καὶ κατέπεσεν ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐπίτηδες, τό τε αἷμα ἤμεσεν ὡς ἴδιον, καὶ ἀρθεὶς ὡς καὶ παραχρῆμα τελευτήσων ἐς οἴκημα ἐκομίσθη, καὶ αὐτὸς μὲν ἀφανὴς ἐγένετο, κριοῦ δὲ σῶμα ἐς λάρνακα ἀντ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐμβληθὲν ἐκαύθη. καὶ ἐκ τούτου ὁ μὲν ἀμείβων ἀεὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὴν ἐσθῆτα ἄλλοτε ἄλλῃ ἐπλανᾶτο.

59 For example, Julianus (on whom, see Gleason 2011, 72; Scott 2018a, 92) and Numerianus (on whom, see Potter 2008).

60 See further Kuhn in this volume.

> Sextus Condianus, the son of Maximus, who surpassed all others by reason both of his native ability and his training, when he heard that sentence of death had been pronounced against him, too, drank the blood of a hare (he was living in Syria at the time), after which he mounted a horse and purposely fell from it; then, as he vomited the blood, which was supposed to be his own, he was taken up, apparently on the point of death, and was carried to his room. He himself now disappeared, while a ram's body was placed in a coffin in his stead and burned. After this, constantly changing his appearance and clothing, he wandered about here and there.

An imposter-tale with elements of mistaken identity not uncommon within the historiographic tradition follows.[61] Yet, Dio's interest in the elaborate and bloody mechanics of the *Scheintod* that lead up to the imposter-tale marks a departure from the historiographic and entry into the novelistic. Gleason (2011) has analyzed this and other instances of mistaken identity as well as Dio's use of signs and portents. She shows that Dio was literarily creative in the contemporary books as he covered a period that was destabilized to such an extent that searching for truth was not simple, even for eyewitnesses.[62] Dio's narrative mode in his treatment of Sextus Condianus draws equally upon novelistic and historiographic traditions in a manner that confirms Gleason's observation of fictive and non-fictive tensions.

6 A Novel Narrative World

If we consider the chronology of events in the *Roman History* both with respect to composition and actual occurrence, we find that novelistic elements are most dense during Dio's latest stages of writing, namely the contemporary books and potential late insertions to earlier books.[63] While in some form many of the so-called novelistic elements that I have discussed appear in historiography prior to Dio – Herodotus offers wise counselors; Thucydides and Polybius, the power of *tuche*; Livy, characterization through *topoi*; Tacitus, bandits and

61 Compare, e.g., the "False Neros" (Tac. *Hist.* 2.8–9).

62 See also Allen and Kuhn in this volume.

63 The Pannonian ethnogeography and the *consolatio* of Cicero, as discussed above, were potential late inserts into the non-contemporary books. All of the other passages that I have discussed in detail appear in the contemporary books.

dramatic death scenes – the density of these elements in one period and the personal application to the author himself are remarkable in Dio's *Roman History*. That a narrative mode permitting the egotistical, melodramatic, and fantastic elements otherwise unique to the novel becomes more prevalent in the contemporary books may make sense, especially in light of one of Kemezis' emphases in his treatment of Dio's historiographical method, namely that Dio changes his mode of writing at various stages in Roman history, including the period from Commodus onward: with political change under the Severans, authors "found new ways of using narrative."[64] Dio is among the authors of the period who created "narrative worlds" that were "influenced but not determined by external reality."[65]

As the narrative world of the *Roman History* becomes increasingly novelistic, Dio's inclusion of himself as a participant in historic events also increases, resulting in a contemporary account that, as Gowing has remarked, is "wholly personal."[66] The historiographer vividly writes himself as a protagonist who – observer of signs, interpreter of dreams and dedicatee of *tuche* – is driven across the Mediterranean before an ultimate return to his homeland. His ethnographies and rhetorical *consolationes* are most elaborate when he is himself a participant in peril. Banditry narratives that highlight tensions with the status quo and paradoxes of identity that combine truths and fictions are placed amidst his senatorial tenure. It is, then, during the period in which Dio was best placed to employ autopsy that we find him, rather paradoxically, writing more frequently in modes similar to those of the authors of novelistic fiction. Yet, it is with such narrative strategies that Dio uniquely paints images of the anxieties of a senator whose safety and autonomy were destabilized during this period in Roman history.[67] Such narrative strategies prove to be, then, novel in more ways than one.

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64 Kemezis 2014, 96–97.

65 Kemezis 2014, 11.

66 Gowing 1992, 21. See further Hidber 2004, 190n70; Jones 2016, 302–303; Scott 2018a, 28–29 and 152–153; Scott 2018b. Gleason (2011, 45) draws parallels between Achilles Tatius' Clitophon and Dio's first-person awestruck passivity in their respective stories. Passivity and centrality, however, are not mutually exclusive.

67 On the dangers of being a senator and senatorial historian during Dio's lifetime, see Madsen 2021, 269; Scott 2021, 230–234. On some limitations in historical detail in Dio's contemporary books, but value in his representation of contemporary experience and interpretation, see Kemezis 2021, 217; Madsen 2021, 269.

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CHAPTER 13

Telling Tales of Macrinus: Strategies of Fiction in Dio's Contemporary History

Joel Allen

Dio read the novelists, and the novelists read Dio. At least that is the case that was made by Bowersock, noting as examples Dio's reference to the *Apocolocyntosis* and the similarities of episodes in Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus to Dio's account of the *Boukoloi* bandits in Egypt.[1] In the latter, Dio tells a tale of a charlatan-*cum*-warrior priest, cross-dressing disguises, ransom, and human sacrifice followed by cannibalism, parts of which also occur variously in *Leucippe and Cleitophon* and the *Aethiopica*. Very early, scholars saw the novelists as echoes of the historian whom they viewed as authoritative by virtue of being non-fiction and thus reflecting a "real event". Bowersock rightly dismissed the argument, noting that plotlines like this were simply in the air among all writers of the period: Any story of Egypt, historical or otherwise, "true" or otherwise, could credibly deploy tales of the celebrity *Boukoloi*.

This article begins from the premise that Dio himself was, of course, aware of the phenomenon that Bowersock was observing – that themes and styles of literary prose fiction could have a place in historical genres – and that he self-consciously alluded to recognizably novelistic tropes in his contemporary history.[2] Following Gleason's lead from an important article of 2011, I argue that Dio's resonances with contemporaneous fiction – and more will be adduced, below, to join the *Boukoloi* discussed by Bowersock – were deliberately constructed as a means of commenting upon the blurring of lines between reality and representation in the imperial politics of his day. Since the rise of Commodus in 180 and the concomitant end of Dio's "golden age" (72[71].36.4), emperors, of whom Dio himself had experience as a senator, increasingly attained power through unconventional means, by assassination or usurpation, yet ironically portrayed themselves as champions of continuity. Septimius Severus preserved the Antonine name; Macrinus cultivated a beard

1 Bowersock 1994, 51–53. Dio's reference to *Apocolocyntosis*: Cass. Dio 61.35.3 [Xiph.]. Similar references to the *Boukoloi*: Cass. Dio 72 [71].4.1–2 [Xiph.]; Ach. Tat. 3.9–24; 4.1–18; Heliod. *Aeth.* 1.1–3; 1.27–33; 2.1–3. See also *HA*, *Marc.* 21.2, *Avid. Cass.* 6.7.

2 Compare, now, Kemezis 2020 on the use of novelistic techniques by Florus and Appian.

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to resemble his predecessors (of no filial relation); Elagabalus claimed to be a son of Caracalla, only to be challenged in the same vein by Julia Maesa, who (also falsely) subsequently declared Severus Alexander to be the *bona fide* son and heir. Gleason saw Dio's repeated stories of "doubles and masquerades" – historical figures operating in disguise or in opposition to expected norms, or as shams – as the author's attempt to highlight "the problems of deception and authenticity" in the politics of his day; Dio used his text to "respon[d] to instability in the imperial succession."[3] I would argue that novelistic presences in Dio served a similar function, drawing attention to the fickle nature of authority as embodied by emperors and empresses, and underscoring the fantastic qualities that had accrued around senatorial careers, mere corruptions of previous experience. Deploying the sensations of prose fiction alongside conventional historiography thus had the effect of shading Dio's very narrative as a similar kind of double or masquerade as Gleason traced in the *content* of the histories: The text embodied a "tension between appearance and reality" that characterized Dio's contemporary political and social worlds.[4]

For the purposes of this article, I limit my observations to Dio's account of Macrinus as a case study. The text (Book 79[78], in the main) is largely intact, and it covers a period during which Dio himself was active as a senator, and thus often an eyewitness to his subjects.[5] That Dio chose to walk a line between history and prose genres that traded in marvels, melodrama, and spectacle precisely at the moment when his access to political history was current and firsthand – and therefore should, by rights, include the "facts" as he understood them – underscores the author's conscious departure from the Thucydidean prototype that he championed elsewhere.[6] In Book 73(72), just after Dio has finished an account of Commodus' outlandish exploits in the arena, he apologizes for including the element of the sensational (Cass. Dio 73[72].18.3–4 [Xiph.], excerpted):

3 Gleason 2011, 39 and 79.

4 Gleason 2011, 46; cf. Osgood 2016, 179–80, on Dio's account of Elagabalus as both a kind of "secret history" and "satire," which conveys Dio's judgment against autocracy. Compare the conclusion of Kemezis 2020, 133 on Florus' and Appian's resonances with story-telling devices present in Chariton: "[W]ithin the conformity and consensus of Antonine political discourse, the narrative techniques of the novel offered a unique opportunity to explore the range of possible answers to questions that could not be explicitly debated."

5 Millar 1964, 160–168 is similarly singularly dedicated to Dio's account of Macrinus, in succession with other sections that proceed emperor by emperor, but Millar does not comment extensively on prose style or rhetorical strategy.

6 Scott 2013, 250, comparing Cass. Dio 53.19.6 with Thuc. 1.20–22. Scholarship on Dio's use of Thucydides is extensive; see e.g. Potter 2011, 333; Lange 2019; and Lange 2021, with attendant bibliography.

> Καὶ μή μέ τις κηλιδοῦν τὸν τῆς ἱστορίας ὄγκον, ὅτι καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα συγγράφω, νομίσῃ.... καὶ μέντοι καὶ τἆλλα πάντα τὰ ἐπ᾽ ἐμοῦ πραχθέντα καὶ λεπτουργήσω καὶ λεπτολογήσω μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ πρότερα, ὅτι τε συνεγενόμην αὐτοῖς, καὶ ὅτι μηδένα ἄλλον οἶδα τῶν τι δυναμένων ἐς συγγραφὴν ἀξίαν λόγου καταθέσθαι διηκριβωκότα αὐτὰ ὁμοίως ἐμοί.
>
> Let no one think that I am sullying the dignity of history by recording such occurrences.... Indeed, all the other events that took place in my lifetime I shall describe with more exactness and detail than earlier occurrences, for the reason that I was present when they happened and know no one else, among those who have any ability in writing a worthy record of events, who has so accurate a knowledge of them as I.[7]

Dio thus conceived of a difference between history, in its possession of "dignity" (τὸν τῆς ἱστορίας ὄγκον), and other genres of prose, presumably, by extension, of lesser status.[8] And yet, as I argue below, he nevertheless relied upon strategies of fiction to present a particular interpretation of events, to add nuance, and to develop personages. Dio's novelistic underpinning suggests, simply by means of the form that the history takes, a world turned upside-down.

1 Episodes and the Episodic

An attempt to define the traits of an all-encompassing genre of "prose fiction" seems finally to be acknowledged by scholars as a lost enterprise, and a potentially unproductive one, in any case. Rather than composing a "checklist against which to judge individual works worthy of inclusion or exclusion," Morales observes a "mode of imagination" that characterizes not only what we usually list as "the novels" (the canonical five: *Callirhoe*, by Chariton; *Daphnis and Chloe*, by Longus; *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, by Achilles Tatius; *Ephesiaca*, by Xenophon of Ephesus; and *Aethiopica*, by Heliodorus), but also other texts such as sensational biographies and hagiographies, extraordinary travel narratives, tales of utopias, or epistolary exercises in rhetoric, which had previously

7 All translations follow Cary's Loeb edition (1914–1927), occasionally amended.

8 Cf. Marincola 1997, 92: in this passage Dio "seems to be treading the line between history and biography or, perhaps better, between history and memoirs. Dio will make a claim for the utility of such narratives precisely because they will be an aid to future readers in understanding the relations between Emperor and Senate." See also Scott 2017, 3–4. To these observations, I would add that the very presence of a different style, technique, and genre of prose also and itself could prove the flightiness, as it were, of a contemporary emperor.

been viewed as outliers or "fringe" players in the genre, but which have increasingly been counted as relevant and even central.[9] As Morales argued, new paths for scholarly inquiry are better fashioned around emphases of analysis, which produce their own "alignment of texts," some of which may not normally be classed as fictive. In such a spirit, I note that a characteristic shared by both our five principal "novels" and Dio's contemporary history is an interest in episodic exposition. In prose fiction, plots often seem to be little more than collections of smaller stories arranged in a loose frame. Much is recounted through first-person narration, as encouraged by an outside force or impetus, such as a dream, or even by an empress, as in the case of the *Life of Apollonius* by Philostratus.[10] All the while, the bounds of credibility, while tested and pushed to the limits, remain intact, which has led scholars to retire the term "novel" in favor of Sextus Empiricus' *plasma*, a fictional tale that nevertheless follows the rules and conventions of "reality".[11]

Dio's account of Macrinus can be described as a series of such episodic *plasmata*.[12] Schmidt noted an escalation in the use of anecdotes by Dio as he reached his contemporary books, a phenomenon that Gleason attributed to the influence of novels.[13] Clusters of passages in our case study are frequently cordoned off by particles of exposition, such as "it happened thus" (ἐπράχθη δὲ ὧδε, *vel sim.*: note Cass. Dio 79[78].5.4; 79[78].26.1; 79[78].30.1; 79[78].38.1), or, "such was the story" (καὶ τὰ … οὕτως ἔσχεν, *vel sim.*: note Cass. Dio 79[78].10.1; 79[78].38.1); at a critical moment in his reportage – the assassination of Caracalla – Dio flags a particularly abrupt swing in tone and tempo by offering,

9 Morales 2009, 10–11. Pathbreaking scholars made extensive attempts to categorize texts of prose fiction: Perry 1967, 149 defined the "ideal" novel; Hägg 1983, 34–35 proposed further distinctions between sophistic and pre-sophistic novels; Holzberg 1995 argued for an evolution of the form over time (although establishing chronologies remains a notorious puzzle) and made a case for so-called "comic-realistic" works as divergent from "idealistic." Still, all of these scholars were open to considering other texts alongside the usual five; an early but systematic overview is at Holzberg 1996. Goldhill 2008 discusses what was at stake in past attempts at rules of a genre. Futre Pinheiro 2018 provides a thorough summary of the state of the field and its path over the previous decade, including important bibliography.

10 On the unreliability of fictive narrators, see Whitmarsh & Bartsch 2008. On the importance of the figure of Julia Domna to Philostratus' project, see Kemezis 2014. Gleason 2011, 45 attributed Dio's first-person narration in anecdotes to the influence of the novel.

11 Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.* 1.263–269; see Bowersock 1994, 10.

12 Gleason 2011, 35–36.

13 Schmidt 2000, 24–25; Gleason 2011, 45. Kemezis 2016, 354 observed a progressively more anecdotal and episodic approach on Dio's part in moving from Macrinus to Elagabalus, with emphasis on the latter. Potter 1999, 85–87 and Scott 2017, 10–12 discuss Dio's shifts in style and tone in moving to his contemporary books.

in the first person, that "at this point in my narrative, other things amaze me" (Cass. Dio 79[78].7.1: καί μοι καὶ ἐνταῦθα τοῦ λόγου θαυμάσαι πάμπολλα ἐπέρχεται). In the case of 79[78].5.4, the phrase "ἐπράχθη δὲ ὧδε" marks the division between a summary analysis of the political backgrounds of Macrinus' co-conspirators against Caracalla (Cass. Dio 79[78].5.1–3) and the narrative of the assassination that they carried out (Cass. Dio 79[78].5.4–6.5). The details that ensue in this second half ramble along, and in addition to the sequence of events of Caracalla's demise Dio includes two lengthy glosses, one on the emperor's conniving use and betrayal of interpreters in communicating with foreign tribes, and another on his use of poisons to kill "whomever he wanted" (Cass. Dio 79[78].6.3: ὅσους ἂν ἐθελήσῃ), both of which imply dramatic plotting and suspense akin to romance.

While Dio's overall account of Macrinus is annalistically organized, subsections complicate the structure of the text with a miscellany of tones and topics in keeping with examples of contemporaneous fiction,[14] but what is more, several of the encapsulated episodes, I argue, would have been immediately recognizable to Dio's readers as coming from popular fiction – content, as opposed to just form. I consider three examples here: first, an analogy of Macrinus' biography with the famous transformation and journey of "Lucius" as an ass; second, the miraculous survival of the Egyptian sage Serapio as he confronts execution by Caracalla; and third, Dio's casting of Julia Domna's experiences under Macrinus along the lines of the Widow of Ephesus story, preserved in various forms by Petronius and others, who all seem to be borrowing from a lost Milesian Tale.[15] In all of these Dio borrows from well-known micro-plots of prose fiction, and though the allusions are brief, their effect on Dio's characterizations, I argue, would have been profound.

First, among the portents foretelling Caracalla's fall and Macrinus' rise is the story of a donkey being led from the Capitoline to the Palatine by a mysterious handler who was in search of the emperor (Cass. Dio 79[78].7.4–5):

14 Compare Schulz 2019, 340–357 who sees "second-century miscellanism" with its "combination of information and entertainment" (342) as influential in Suetonius' biographical technique, a genre long linked with popular fiction (see above). Schulz notably does not find the same characteristic in her analysis of Cassius Dio, which by contrast with this study focussed on his accounts of Nero and Domitian, not the contemporary books.

15 References for all of these are forthcoming below. Other episodes, especially as they relate to Elagabalus, would be relevant to cite along these lines but I omit them in the interest of space. The famous tale of Zoticus' failed erection owing to a potion in his attempted seduction of Elagabalus (80.16) is unmistakably novelistic, to say the least: Petronius' Encolpius. Cf. Osgood 2016, 184.

> καὶ ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ δαίμων τις ἀνθρώπου σχῆμα ἔχων ὄνον ἔς τε τὸ Καπιτώλιον καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο ἐς τὸ παλάτιον ἀνήγαγεν, ζητῶν τὸν δεσπότην αὐτοῦ, ὥς γε καὶ ἔφασκεν, καὶ λέγων ἐκεῖνον μὲν ἀπολωλέναι τὸν δὲ Δία ἄρχειν. συλληφθείς τε ἐπὶ τούτῳ καὶ πρὸς τὸν Ἀντωνῖνον ὑπὸ τοῦ Ματερνιανοῦ πεμφθείς "ἀπέρχομαι μέν" ἔφη "ὡς κελεύεις, ἀφίξομαι δὲ οὐ πρὸς τοῦτον τὸν αὐτοκράτορα ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἕτερον," καὶ μετὰ τοῦτ᾽ ἐς τὴν Καπύην ἐλθὼν ἀφανὴς ἐγένετο. τοῦτο μὲν ζῶντος ἔτι αὐτοῦ συνηνέχθη.
>
> In Rome, moreover, a spirit having the appearance of a man led an ass up to the Capitoline and afterward to the Palatine, seeking its master, as he claimed, and stating that he [Antoninus] was dead and Jupiter was now emperor. Upon being arrested for this and sent by Maternianus to Antoninus, he said: "I go, as you bid; but I shall face not this emperor but another." And when he reached Capua a little later, he vanished. This took place while he [Antoninus] was still alive.

At this point, Dio moves quickly to the next item in a catalog of omens against Caracalla, and from there to the fate of the emperor's memory among Romans as a figure of evil (Cass. Dio 79[78].8–9). At 79[78].10, Dio recounts his famous dream in which a ghost of Septimius Severus encourages him to extend his history down to his own day.[16] Immediately thereafter, complying with the vision, Dio pauses to introduce Macrinus, whose role in the narrative is about to spike, and in so doing, returns to the vision of the donkey (Cass. Dio 79[78].11.1–2):

> Ὁ δὲ δὴ Μακρῖνος τὸ μὲν γένος Μαῦρος, ἀπὸ Καισαρείας, γονέων ἀδοξοτάτων ἦν, ὥστε καὶ σφόδρα εἰκότως αὐτὸν τῷ ὄνῳ τῷ ἐς τὸ παλάτιον ὑπὸ τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐσαχθέντι εἰκασθῆναι· τά τε γὰρ ἄλλα καὶ τὸ οὖς τὸ ἕτερον κατὰ τὸ τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν Μαύρων ἐπιχώριον διετέτρητο·
>
> Macrinus was a Moor by birth, from Caesarea, and the son of most obscure parents, so that he was very appropriately likened to the ass that was led up to the Palatine by the spirit; in particular, one of his ears had been pierced in accordance with the custom followed by most of the Moors.

The equivalence between the donkey and Macrinus, even though pivoting on a feature as banal as a pierced ear, is critical to understanding Dio's coming exposition of Macrinus as a usurper and later as an emperor. The above two passages are arranged in such a way as to frame the death of Caracalla, with the

16 On similar uses of dreams in Dio and the novelists, see Bowersock 1994, 77–78 and 87–98 and Jones in this volume.

result that while he is alive, we have the donkey, and once he is dead, we suddenly see Macrinus anew. Any contemporary reader of Dio would have immediately thought of the tale of Lucius, as preserved by Lucian and Apuleius, and in fragments of other authors as collected by Slater.[17] There is no room here to review in detail the saga of the man turned to a donkey and his journey to return to form.[18] Suffice it to say for our purposes that in Dio's case, the image effectively posits the story, or *a* story, of Macrinus. Like Lucius, we understand, Macrinus has suffered and wandered, but has achieved his destiny with a *metamorphosis* into an emperor. By deploying this fictive turn, Dio has planted in his reader thoughts of tribulations, ridicule, and ultimately triumph, but of a distinctly absurd variety. For the context of which Macrinus was a part, the tale suggests a fantasy of unreality disguised as politics. Gleason argued that Dio's chief objection to the rise of Macrinus was his circumvention of senatorial approval – "a fact that senators would rather not face: they were becoming irrelevant."[19] Eliding Macrinus with Lucius clarifies the historian's opinion of this turn of events – an un-senatorial elevation of an equestrian – so contrary to the proper procedure as to seem *magical*. The bawdy and forlorn hero known well to readers has thus come in handy for Dio, and assists in a historical argument.[20]

Second, that Macrinus would depose Caracalla and take the throne was also portended before Dio's allusion to the donkey: The Egyptian mystic, Serapio, had declared as much publicly and earned Caracalla's wrath as a result (Cass. Dio 79[78].4.4–5):

> ἐφοβήθη τε ὁ Μακρῖνος μὴ καὶ διαφθαρῇ ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ διά τε τοῦτο καὶ ὅτι Σεραπίων τις Αἰγύπτιος ἄντικρυς τῷ Ἀντωνίνῳ πρὸ ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν εἰρήκει ὅτι τε ὀλιγοχρόνιος ἔσοιτο καὶ ὅτι ἐκεῖνος αὐτὸν διαδέξοιτο, καὶ οὐκ ἀνεβάλετο. ὁ μὲν γὰρ Σεραπίων ἐπὶ τούτῳ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον λέοντι παρεβλήθη, ἐπεὶ δ᾽ οὐχ ἥψατο αὐτοῦ τὴν χεῖρα μόνον, ὥς φασι, προτείναντος, ἐφονεύθη.

17 Slater 2014.

18 Studies of the ancestry and variations of the tale of Lucius/the ass are abundant: In addition to Slater 2014, see also Anderson 1984, 198–210; Sandy 1997; Graverini 2002; and Slater 2002, with bibliographies.

19 Gleason 2011, 67.

20 For other possible interpretations of the original tale, which may assist further in exegesis of Dio's meaning with the allusion, see Kirichenko 2009, who considers Lucius from the perspectives of philosophy, satire, comedy, and even law and order (my term). On the role of religious trends in emphasizing Lucius' transformation *back* into human form (a "re-conversion"), see Montiglio 2013, 163–170. Scott 2012, 20 and Scott 2013, 247 rightly read Dio's elision of Macrinus with the ass as a reference to the emperor's low (equestrian) social status.

> Macrinus, fearing he should be put to death by Antoninus on this account [an incriminating letter against him], especially as a certain Egyptian, Serapio, had told the emperor to his face a few days earlier that he would be short-lived and that Macrinus would succeed him, delayed no longer. Serapio had at first been thrown to a lion for this, but when, as the result of his merely holding out his hand, as is reported, the animal did not touch him, he was slain.

Another stock scene from fiction is thus in evidence: the figure whose worthiness imbues him or her with a kind of magical invulnerability in the face of execution. Similar miracles occur in both Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Cleitophon* and Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, as well as being stock-in-trade for Christian martyrology, which is increasingly seen by scholars as belonging to the same category of Greek imperial prose fiction.[21] The fate of Chariclea in the *Aethiopica* (Heliod. *Aeth*. 8.9) suggests one way that a reader would understand Dio's account: In the novel, she has accused the empress Arsace of conspiring against her and faces execution by burning at the stake. Yet the flames will not touch her and recoil when she jumps to meet them, and she survives (Heliod. *Aeth*. 8.9.9–15). In Heliodorus, the episode establishes the villainy and purity of the various characters, a quality that has made the tropes useful to Dio, regardless of his project as a historian. Readers are left to make their own associations: Caracalla is unmistakably cruel, but perhaps he is also feminine and eastern if one thinks of Heliodorus' Arsace, or perhaps he is also lawless, if one considers Achilles Tatius' bandits (who staged a violent but ultimately false sacrifice of Leucippe; Ach. Tat. 3.15), and so on.[22] Characters who survive against impossible odds, often via *Scheintod*, are, by contrast, heroic, demonstrably immune to "the fickleness of fate."[23]

Third, Dio's account of Julia Domna's mourning for the dead Caracalla largely follows the plot of the Widow of Ephesus story, which occurs in Petronius' *Satyricon* (Petron. *Sat*. 111–112) and elsewhere.[24] In the fictional tale – at least, the self-avowedly fictional one – a recent widow is so grief-stricken at the death of her husband that she swears that she will commit suicide through entombment with his corpse. As it turns out, just before the stone rolls into

21 Hägg 1983, 66–70. See especially, recently, Andújar 2012, with bibliography. Cf. Gleason 2011, 78–79.

22 For a full examination of Dio's negative assessment of Caracalla's policies, see Davenport 2012a.

23 Gleason 2011, 47. See also Jones in this volume on the use of *Scheintod* in novels and Dio.

24 On the origin of the narrative of the Widow of Ephesus as a Milesian Tale, and on its appearance in Phaedrus, before Petronius, see Courtney 2001, 166–167.

place she falls in with a handsome soldier who was posted nearby to guard the body of an outlaw after his execution. Their concealment in the tomb then facilitates a three-day sex binge. When the widow's newly beloved soldier faces punishment (for the corpse that he was set to guard had been stolen during his absence), she gamely interposes the remains of her husband, now in disguise (and debased) as the dead outlaw. The ironies are obvious as the widow's selfless devotion is exposed as a pretense: She has quickly moved on.

In Dio's tale, Julia Domna, too, is prepared to commit suicide in grief after (but not at all *for*) the death of Caracalla, by means of self-flagellation followed by self-starvation, but a different path occurs to her (Cass. Dio 79[78].23.1–3, accepting the proposals for the lacunae as offered by Cary in the Loeb edition):

> ἡ δὲ Ἰουλία ἡ τοῦ Ταραύτου μήτηρ ἔτυχε μὲν ἐν τῇ Ἀντιοχείᾳ οὖσα, καὶ οὕτω παραχρῆμα, ἅμα τῇ πύστει τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ, διετέθη ὥστε καὶ πλήξασθαι ἰσχυρῶς καὶ ἀποκαρτερῆσαι ἐπιχειρῆσαι. ὃν γὰρ ζῶντα καὶ ἐμίσει, τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον τότε τετελευτηκότα ἐπόθει, οὐχ ὅτι ἐκεῖνον ζῆν ἤθελεν, ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὴ ἰδιωτεύουσα ἤχθετο. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τὸν Μακρῖνον πολλὰ καὶ δεινὰ ἐλοιδόρησεν. ἔπειθ' ὡς οὔτε τι τῆς βασιλικῆς θεραπείας ἢ καὶ τῆς τῶν δορυφόρων περὶ αὐτῇ φρουρᾶς ἠλλοιώθη, καὶ ἐκεῖνος χρηστά τινα αὐτῇ, τὰ λεχθέντα ὑπ' αὐτῆς ἀκηκοώς, ἐπέστειλε, θαρσήσασα τήν τε τοῦ θανάτου ἐπιθυμίαν κατέθετο, καὶ μηδὲν αὐτῷ ἀντιγράψασα ἔπραττέν τι καὶ ἐς τοὺς συνόντας οἱ στρατιώτας | ἄλλως τε.... | καὶ ἐκειν ... ||.... καὶ τῷ τε Μα|κρίνῳ.... ομένους |.... υ υἱέος αὐτῆς |.... ον μνημονεύοντας, ὅπως αὐταρχήσῃ τῇ τε Σεμιράμιδι καὶ τῇ Νιτώκριδι, ἅτε καὶ ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν τρόπον τινὰ χωρίων αὐταῖς οὖσα, παρισουμένη.
>
> Now Julia, the mother of Tarautas [i.e., Caracalla], chanced to be in Antioch, and at the first information of her son's death, she was so affected that she dealt herself a violent blow and tried to starve herself to death. Thus she mourned, now that he was dead, the very man whom she had hated while he lived; yet it was not because she wished that he were alive, but because she was vexed at having to return to private life. This led her to indulge in much bitter abuse of Macrinus. Then, as no change was made in her royal retinue or in the guard of praetorians in attendance upon her, and the new emperor sent her a kindly message, although he had heard what she had said, she took courage, put aside her desire for death, and without writing him any reply, began intriguing with the soldiers she had about her, who [were mutinous] to begin with, [were very fond of] her, and were [angry] with Macrinus, and [consequently] held her son in [pleasant]er remembrance; for she hoped to become sole ruler

> and make herself the equal of Semiramis and Nitocris, inasmuch as she came in a sense from the same parts as they.

The expositions concerning the Widow of Ephesus by Petronius and the mourning Julia Domna by Dio are not perfect analogs. Dio is explicit from the start in saying that the empress was not mourning for Caracalla but for her own loss of status, whereas Petronius' character tells a meandering tale and is more subtle in revealing the insincerity of the widow.[25] And while Petronius' widow rescues her soldier with a ruse, the soldiers of Dio's Julia Domna never seem to be in jeopardy (though lacunae hinder a final reading). But important resonances are nevertheless in place – false mourning,[26] an intended suicide, a new "attraction" to soldier(s) in their company, and survival by their support. Dio's method of depicting the origins of Julia Domna's plot against Macrinus in this way seems to have been influenced by a popular motif in fiction, which in turn would have cast Julia Domna in a particular light. As her mourning becomes her cover and her salvation, she emerges as wily and bold, even as she is also, possibly, selfish and unscrupulous. It remains unclear whether the historian's frame is sympathetic to his subject or the opposite: The widow of Ephesus similarly, while randy, is not explicitly vilified by Petronius. Perhaps both interpretations are possible. Julia Domna is a sympathetic character who is functioning ruthlessly in a hard world.[27]

All of these episodes – the transformation of the donkey, the inviolability of Serapio, and the conniving of Julia Domna – are inserted by Dio like morsels into a larger meal. They add flavor to the story, as well as nuance and dimension.[28] Lest the historian paint himself into a corner, he adapts certain details and separates the episodes from the rest of his narrative so that they do not disrupt his purpose beyond their usefulness. Whereas the fictional tales of Chariclea and the Widow of Ephesus end with happily-ever-afters, Dio ends his

25 Note also that Julia Domna's behaviour following the death of Geta also was insincere but in the reverse direction: Caracalla forced her to display joy against her emotions (Cass. Dio 78[77].2.5–6).

26 Dio had also foreshadowed Julia Domna's contempt for her son previously, in a passage where she intercepted a letter predicting Caracalla's death, but did nothing to act upon it (Cass. Dio 79[78].4.3).

27 Slater 1990, 110 and Plaza 2000, 181–185 discuss the ambiguity of Petronius and the various possible interpretations of the tale, including as satire, invective, and even a celebration of life. Compare Langford in this volume. On Dio's ambiguity in depicting Julia Domna elsewhere, see Langford 2013, 22. Kemezis 2014, 88 points out Dio's approval of Julia Domna's "mainstream respectability" and "authentic philosophy".

28 See Saller 1980, 73 on the rhetorical use of anecdotes in a variety of literary genres, in which accuracy of detail was less prized than ambience.

"versions" abruptly with a death. Serapio works his magic with the lions, but we learn in one unexpected word at the end, ἐφονεύθη, that he was murdered anyway, and Julia Domna embarks on her plot against Macrinus, but after some lacunae in the manuscript, she is soon deceased, possibly from breast cancer. Dio wants to use the resonances of fictive tropes, but he does not want to be bogged down by them, and so they are dispensed with before they would need to be squared with the rest of the "history." With quicksilver efficiency, Dio has flashed valuable intertexts, useful for providing the reader with a host of associations; capitalizing on fiction's popularity he has thus saved himself from arresting the narrative with explicit, clumsy exposition. Such episodes also suffuse the background of his histories with a supernatural dimension and thus heighten the stakes. Unlike his discomfort in recounting Commodus' gladiatorial habits, disgraceful and absurd, as quoted above, in these cases Dio feels no compunction to apologize, being content, rather, to tell his stories using a coin of his writerly realm.

2 Fantastic Journeys

Apart from specific episodes, another feature of prose fiction that recurs throughout Dio's account of Macrinus is the interest in convoluted, pan-Mediterranean journeys, complete with reversals of fortune and harrowing plights.[29] In the novels, such peregrinations often begin with the separation of a hero or heroine from an ideal state of some kind, be it the experience of true love, or the enjoyment of prosperity, or even the human form itself. A quest is required to re-attain what was lost or to attain in the first place what is desired. The traveler encounters troublesome obstacles along the way, some frightening, some ridiculous, many both of these things, but all of them usually overcome in a narrow escape or solution.[30] We have already seen a subtle allusion to this with Macrinus, as a quest is in the background of the elision of his usurpation with the story of Lucius/the ass. Several figures who occupy supporting roles in Dio's contemporary books endure similar vicissitudes. In these cases, we see more than simple ups and downs, or success followed by failure; rather, Dio embellishes each with details that smack of humor or ahistorical drama. For example, Marcius Claudius Agrippa is said to have started out as an

29 The importance of quests to fiction is one area that approaches unanimity: Perry 1967, 28–29; Holzberg 1995, 12–14; and Goldhill 2008, 198–199, for example, offer introductions, and Konstan 2002 discusses variations across the texts.

30 Perry 1967, 90–92; Holzberg 1995, 10–11; Goldhill 2008, 195; Morgan 2017, 397–398.

official in the treasury under Septimius Severus but then stood trial before him for serving as a hairdresser enslaved to a woman.[31] Next came banishment to an island, then recall and promotion to the palace by Caracalla. But Marcius was to fall again: He was soon demoted owing to his recruitment of prepubescent boys to the legions. Now Macrinus has come along and appointed him governor, but not just once: Marcius is first stationed at Pannonia before being switched to Dacia. The details of hairdressing and undue interest in youths (whether salacious, to slake lust, or opportunistic, to enhance the strength of legions; either way was corrupt) are what motivated Marcius Agrippa's shifts in career, and there is a curious lack of analysis in terms of politics and military leadership that one would expect in a historical narrative. Dio chooses, rather, to accentuate personalities and plots that entertain as much as edify, as well as color Macrinus as an emperor.[32]

One could also cite the example of Dio's Basilianus (79[78].35). He was serving as governor of Egypt when Macrinus was overthrown by Elagabalus' supporters. Believing erroneously that Macrinus had prevailed, he executed Elagabalus' envoys. When he realized his mistake, he fled and managed to make it as far as Brundisium. Things were evidently going well until something as banal as his hunger tripped him up: He was discovered when he asked for food. He was thus apprehended, and his travels took a more macabre turn as he was deported to Nicomedia for execution. Such scenarios would not be out of place in a Greek novel.

Macrinus' own denouement also traces an arc through the familiar terrain of Asia Minor (79[78].39). Upon the rise of Elagabalus, he resorted to deceit and disguise to make his escape. His flight took him from Antioch to Cilicia, and then to Cappadocia, on past Galatia, and through Bithynia to Chalcedon, all of which are enumerated explicitly by Dio. Dio compares his flight to that of a runaway slave or a bandit, both stock characters and stock situations in novels (Cass. Dio 79[78].40.5). Ultimately arrested in any case, he tried to commit suicide by throwing himself from a cart on the way back to Antioch but failed – another novelistic trope, the failed suicide – and was ultimately done in by a soldier. All of this occurs, of course, after the reader has already been alerted to Macrinus' off-stage journey as a Lucius-like figure.

31 Marcius' story is told at Cass. Dio 79[78].13. Gleason 2011, 67 reads Macrinus' and Marcius' ascents as of a piece.

32 Scott 2013, 247–248. Davenport 2012b discusses Macrinus' preference for equestrian governors and Dio's reaction.

The *ne plus ultra* of wandering characters in Dio's history tale is the historian himself.[33] Located at 80[80].1 in our editions, Dio summarizes his career as having taken him from Asia to Bithynia to Africa to Italy to Dalmatia to Upper Pannonia, and back to Campania, whence he set out for home in Nicaea. Having encountered Dio's biography episodically throughout the preceding books, we know already that along his bizarre, lifetime journey, Dio had faced down threats and experienced near misses.[34] He suppressed laughter when witnessing the lunacy of Commodus, swinging an ostrich's head by its ropey neck (73[72].21.1–2). He desperately felt his head for hair when a rumor circulated that an unknown bald man was being hunted by the emperor, paranoid of conspiracy (77[76].8.4). He happened upon Caracalla himself outside a banquet in Nicomedia and listened as he bloviated some ominous lines of Euripides, apropos of nothing (79[78].8.4). And of course, as with any proper novelistic narrator, dreams upon dreams told him to write about all of this (73[72].23.3–4; 79[78].10.1–2). Dio's *own* experience of the empire of his day is akin to a fantasy.

3 "Creative Historiography" and Escape Literature

What does it mean for our larger interpretation of Dio's text if we accept the observation that he has used tropes and characterizations that are patently ahistorical given their prominence in contemporaneous and preceding fiction? After all, such *plasmata* are not all of what Dio writes. The above selections have not addressed significant stretches of Dio's account of Macrinus' reign in which he writes of political maneuvering, international diplomacy, and warfare, without any apparent desire to distract or digress, nor to depart from historiographic habits as practiced by his generic forebears.[35] Amidst the fictive episodes, we also see a moralizing comment on human nature that would remind a reader of Tacitus (79[78].20.3). I would argue this hybrid style of composition is in keeping with what Potter has called "creative historiography."[36] A trend was taking shape in the early third century among writers who were

33 Compare Jones in this volume. See also Kuhn in this volume for Dio's emphasis on fantastic natural phenomena encountered in his travels.

34 On the anecdotal nature of Dio's self-references, see Marincola 1997, 199–200.

35 Again (see note 13), Kemezis 2016, 354 noted that Dio's account of Macrinus is less sensational than that of Elagabalus.

36 Potter 2011, 334 (albeit in reference to Herodian). Compare Asirvatham 2017, 481 on the importance of rhetoric to Dio's historiography and to that of other so-called Second Sophistic historians.

historically oriented. As Potter has suggested, Herodian wrote as if describing pictures[37] – a series of meta-*ekphrases* rather like translating a graphic novel for the blind. Marius Maximus' biographies, too, were fictive and entertaining: Notably, the *Historia Augusta* includes stories of the *Boukoloi* bandits of Egypt (see above). Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* and, especially, the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, tread a similar line.[38]

"Not true" though these episodes (may) be, or fantastical beyond seriousness in consideration of politics, they are nevertheless not useless to modern historians of Macrinus. As Kemezis observed in relation to fanciful accounts of Elagabalus:

> [W]hile the pieces of data that we extract from our sources are potential facts about historical reality, they are also functional units of the author's narrative. The author is including them not simply because he believes or wishes us to believe that they are true, but for some reason intrinsic to his task as a storyteller. The narrative function of a given piece of data in its original literary context affects both its factual reliability in absolute terms (has the author imagined or inferred these events because they were necessary for the story as he tells it to make sense?) and the functions it can be made to serve in a modern historical narrative.[39]

Our "modern historical narratives" of Macrinus would do well to note that at least one important perspective on the emperor included fictive imaginings of his career and those in his orbit. I quote further from Kemezis in the same study: "We find individual personalities emotively easier to contemplate than impersonal forces."[40] With fictive resonances, Dio has written such "individual personalities" for Caracalla, for Macrinus, and for Julia Domna. As Gleason put it, "traditional plots, whose stock characters operate with intelligible motivations in predictable ways, actually influence how people perceive and

37 Potter 1999, 87.

38 See Kemezis 2014 on Philostratus' implicit commentary on the dichotomies between "imperially authorized" stories of the past and those that would be argued by historians. Hunter 1994, 1060 notes in general a shift in post-classical Greek historiography "towards a more overtly dramatic, emotional, and rhetorical style" (though his emphasis is on earlier Hellenistic writers).

39 Kemezis 2016, 353. Cf. Gleason 2011, 79–80: The "image of Dio as a passive recipient of experience … does not do justice to Dio as a literary artist. Who is to say there was no element of artistic intention in the way he selected minor anecdotes, or in the way he developed longer narratives that highlight these themes?"

40 Kemezis 2016, 382.

remember contemporary events."[41] Dio accordingly encourages the reader's perceptions and memories toward conclusions that he shares in regard to Macrinus, Marcius Agrippa, Basilianus, and others – as improper interlopers in political life.

Did readers in Dio's Severan setting even bother with a distinction, history from fiction? Dio's frequent self-modeling on Thucydides need not separate him from authors of less rigorous, less "dignified" forms (to use Dio's term, quoted above, 53.19): Scholars have increasingly found Thucydidean mirroring among the novelists, including not only Chariton, whose mimicry is explicit, but also Longus and Xenophon of Ephesus.[42] Dio's tendency to refer to what he is writing about with the shorthand of neuter plural pronouns along with a modifier (53.19: πάντα τὰ ἑξῆς; 73[72].18.4: πάντα τὰ ἐπ᾽ ἐμοῦ πραχθέντα; see above) follows the titling patterns such as we have them for novels, as shown by Whitmarsh.[43] Prose texts no longer possessed the authority of authenticity simply by not being poetry. The Byzantine *Excerpta Constantiniana*, after all, which is the findspot for significant fragments of Dio, also included Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca*, unmistakably a "novel" as conventionally defined.[44]

Why creative historiography for Dio, and why now in the early third century? Perry's grand explanation for the rise of prose fiction in the Hellenistic era may function as a starting point. The early novels dwelt on the "private concerns of individual man apart from society," as interests were redirected from the city-state to "matters of real feeling."[45] Going further, Reardon viewed the phenomenon as an escape from reality, reflecting contemporaneous trends toward personalized religions.[46] As Hägg put it, the novel's popularity was "an expression of the individual's sense of isolation in the world."[47] Such theories may be out of date for the rise of the novel as a "genre" (such as it is), but they are attractive for guessing at Dio's motivations. As many scholars have shown, Cassius Dio had reason to feel isolated and had reason to seek an escape from reality. Under Commodus and the Severans, he was separated from an ideal state of being – in his case, proper senatorial politics, in which his *ordo* was

41 Gleason 2011, 78.

42 On Dio's use of Thucydides, see above n. 6. For Xenophon and Longus, see MacQueen 1990, 138–159. For Chariton, see Hunter 1994, 1058; Luginbill 2000; and Smith 2007, 155–163.

43 Whitmarsh 2005; Morales 2009, 3.

44 Potter 1999, 73.

45 Perry 1976, 7.

46 Reardon 1971.

47 Hägg 1983, 89.

privileged and acted in partnership with emperors.[48] Gleason has interpreted Dio's interest in disguise and deceit throughout his contemporary books as a comment on the regime: "visible reality was not the only reality."[49]

In our case, the very act of Dio writing his history in the way that he did reflected the themes of the text – that these emperors were increasingly unreal – and we see that both in the episodes themselves and in the presence of the episodic. Macrinus was a usurper and an emperor, but Dio offered to think of him, also, as one does Lucius, as the ass. Julia Domna was an empress and then a refugee and a survivor: Dio considered her, in addition, as a kind of ironic, merry widow. Like any number of novelistic heroes, Dio himself was unmoored and adrift, shipwrecked, and then wandering.[50] On his own journey of survival and hope, he is asking readers to hear his *story*.

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48 For the senatorial element as crucial to Dio's view of an ideal monarchy, see in this volume Madsen, first on the historian's approval of the shift under Augustus away from republican competition to a kind of collaboration with the *princeps*, and second for the realization of the model in the second century. See also in this volume Markov on the uniqueness of Dio's emphasis on the importance of senatorial status and hierarchy, especially compared with Aelius Aristides.

49 Gleason 2011, 44.

50 Again, cf. Gleason 2011, 45: "Passages in which Dio operates novelistically as both character and narrative achieve a kind of double perspective; the story is focalized by turns through Dio the participant-observer and Dio the historian."

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CHAPTER 14

Dio and the Failed Politician Cicero

Robert Porod

This paper examines how Dio depicts the politician Cicero in his account of the Civil War period.[1] According to Fergus Millar's still influential opinion, Dio's view of Cicero is that he was a "complete failure"; we are informed that Cicero is "contemptible."[2] Yet objections to such a severe verdict arise after considered and sensitive study of Dio's books 36 to 47. On the one hand, it becomes apparent that Cicero is frequently his own worst enemy, both in regard to himself and his cause, because of his personal weaknesses. On the other hand, however, after extensive consideration of the direct and indirect characterizations featured in these volumes, there is no reason to deny that Dio's Cicero displays a certain degree of commitment to the *res publica*. That said, we can concede two things to Dio the historian. First, and in contrast to Millar, his genuine

1 The most comprehensive work on Cicero's presence in Dio's work is Montecalvo 2014. In this paper, I argue that Dio read and exploited Cicero's speech *De lege Manilia* (see n. 21 below), the speech on amnesty (see n. 65 below), his Catilinarian speeches (see n. 28 below) and his Philippic speeches (see nn. 68, 77, 84 below). He may also have had knowledge of the early declamatory tradition surrounding Cicero's life and death (see Keeline 2018, 111–146 and 177–188). Further I argue that Dio may well have read some philosophical writings by Cicero, at least the *Tusculanae disputationes* (n. 112 below). This paper, therefore, aims to show Dio not only as the detached historian that he prefers to present himself as, but also as a historian implicitly engaged in conversation with Cicero, an earlier writer who afforded him an opportunity for self-conscious reflection on a life of engagement simultaneously in politics and literature as well as on what an ambitious intellectual and senator should choose in times of unrest and civil wars. For this, see particularly Kemezis in this volume. I wish to express my profound gratitude to Adam Kemezis, Colin Bailey and Beatrice Poletti for their excellent organization of the enjoyable conference held in Banff and for their accurate and constructive comments on earlier draft versions, as well as for their always generous assistance and help with the final version of this paper. Many thanks also to my fellow conference attendees for their stimulating questions and comments, and to Brill's anonymous referees for their valuable comments and suggestions.

2 Millar 1964, 55 and 49 (already Carcopino 1947, 69–70, n. 4). Following Millar, relevant works include Weil 1962, 90; Gudeman 1971, 25; Homeyer 1977, 80–84; Gowing 1992, 151 (in divergence to 145); Rodgers 2008, 297, n. 7; Burden-Strevens 2017, 129; Richter 1968, 192–197 (critically); Lachenaud and Coudry 2011, XXXVI–XXXVIII, esp. XXXVII (stressing the importance of context). Kemezis 2014, 111, with nn. 45–46 is the first to clearly and without any reservation realize that Dio not only knew Cicero's work well, but also had some fascination with him and portrayed him not uniformly unsympathetically. As for Dio's portrait of Pompey, see nn. 4 and 118 below.

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intention to give Cicero his due despite his many, frequently negative, assertions about the latter. Second, Dio endeavours to understand Cicero not only as a reflection of his time[3] but also as a distinctive human being[4] in the context of his time.[5] This paper, therefore, aims for the acceptance of Dio as a historian who endeavours to capture Cicero in the context of the late Roman Republic. The method pursued here is restricted by the fact that it is difficult to determine the specific sources on which Dio bases his account.[6] In regard to Cicero, however, they clearly range from the ambivalent to the unkind.[7] By taking all

3 Burden-Strevens 2016 explores Dio's speeches as a medium of historical explanation. Equally conclusive is Kemezis 2016 who focusses on the egotism and mendacity of political rhetoric during the declining Republic (differently, Fomin 2016). See also Gowing 1998, 381–390 (with Cicero as an historical *exemplum*); Lachenaud and Coudry 2011, XXXVI–XXXVIII (for Books 38–40); Mallan 2016, 259–269 (Cicero and Cato representing the two sides of Republican παρρησία); Burden-Strevens 2017 shows that Dio reconstructs the essential kernel of the Ciceronian speeches thereby reflecting the overall rhetorical strategy of their models. Most recently, Peer 2020, 237 views Cicero as a product of his times.

4 This is not to neglect Dio's emphasis on the destructiveness of institutional competition in the late Republic, as explored by Lindholmer 2019, but in my opinion Dio is also interested to show Cicero as an individual, whereas in the case of Caesar and Pompey and other players he is to a lesser degree interested in this. I argue that Dio had some sympathy for the outstanding orator and writer who could have done much better if he had chosen early enough a quiet life in retirement wholeheartedly devoted to writing, thereby seeking – like Dio himself (see n. 102 below) – to gain fame. For another complex portrait of an individual including different, interconnected "versions", see Potter on Pompey in this volume (see also n. 8 below). On these different "versions" of Pompey and Cicero as intended by Dio to illustrate the failure of aristocratic rule, see also Madsen in this volume.

5 Dio's affiliation with Thucydides (for his method, see Hose 1994, 444–447) can be seen as a genuine concern of the later historian's. Accordingly, he tried, within the framework of what had been predetermined by his sources, to objectively understand historical circumstances. Lange 2016a, 93, n. 4 concurs: "Dio also tried to understand Roman history on its own terms." Generally, in regard to the way ancient historians regarded themselves, see Porod 2013, esp. 229–230, n. 1606. See also n. 114 below.

6 Schwartz 1899, 1697–1714 = Schwartz 1959, 414–438 (followed by Hose 1994, 374–375 and 384); Lintott 1997, 2497–2498 and 2519–2521; Kuhn-Chen 2002, 135–142; Lachenaud and Coudry 2011, XXXVII–XXXVIII; Westall 2016; most recently Urso 2019. Lindholmer 2019, 72–74 is basically very critical towards traditional *Quellenforschung*, arguing that Dio was highly selective in his use of the available sources (esp. 89–93); Scott 2019 argues that Dio selected and arranged his material according to his personal experiences thereby reflecting the concerns of his own times.

7 Lintott 1997, esp. 2514–2517; Urso 2019. For this, see esp. nn. 21–22 and 27–29 below. Westall 2016 believes that for the civil wars Dio relied heavily on Cremutius Cordus, but this view seems partially limited by the fact that Cordus was essentially favourable towards Cicero (see n. 27 below), whereas the sources for Dio's narrative clearly were not. Nonetheless it seems not impossible that Dio for his more favourable assessment of Cicero (see n. 8 below) made some use of Cordus.

these aspects into account, this paper shall examine whether and how Dio succeeds in going one step beyond overtly one-sided traditional judgments.[8]

1 Cicero, a Problematic but Rising Star

Cicero first appears in Dio's account as an advocate of the *lex Manilia* in the year 66 BCE, on the basis of which Pompey, who had successfully led the campaign against the pirates, was now also to be given an extraordinary command for the war against Tigranes and Mithridates (36.42.4–43.5). As with the law proposed by Gabinius, a supporter of Pompey, in the previous year to grant Pompey full powers to fight the pirates (36.23.4–37.2, *lex Gabinia*),[9] this circumstance leads to a conflict of interest between the aristocracy and the people. In both cases, the legislative motions are supported by the people, whose sympathy Pompey enjoys, but violate the *mos maiorum* and incite the conservative nobility's longstanding fears of autocratic rule.[10] By supporting the

8 As in the case of Pompey (see n. 4), Dio gives two different versions of Cicero, one almost completely traditional and negative in his narrative, and one more favourable through the medium of Cicero's direct speeches and especially through the Philiscus-Cicero diatribe as shaped by Dio himself, thereby allowing his readers to understand the "truth" in a more subtle and comprehensive way. For a similar "creative historiography", see Jones and Allen in this volume who observe that Dio in his contemporary books deployed the tools of other prose genres as well (especially those of the novel) to suggest a world full of insecurity and anxieties, thereby destabilizing his main historical narrative. In this sense the two different portraits of Dio's Cicero may very well be intended to reflect as well as to counterbalance the biases of Dio's sources (they were mostly unfavourable towards Cicero) and – probably derived from Dio's own knowledge of Cicero's works (the political speeches and some of his philosophical writings) – to depict a portrait of Cicero closer to the actual historical "truth". Further, Rich 2020, 74–75 has observed a similar tension in Dio's account of the Republic; this shows that Dio's account is more complex than many modern readers would expect it to be. For narratives and speeches in ancient historiography, see esp. n. 89 below.

9 Coudry 2016 focusses on the *lex Gabinia* as the first step in the dissolution of the Republic. Dio gives a much fuller account of that debate than the *lex Manilia*, which circles around the very same topic. Burden-Strevens 2017, 123, therefore, views the *lex Manilia* as a simple parallel to the scenario of 67 BCE. Cf. already Rodgers 2008, 297 and 306; recently Lindholmer 2019, 79. For the passage of the *lex Gabinia* as a key moment, see also Potter in this volume. Kemezis 2014, 113, n. 53 offers the explanation that Cicero would have complicated the stark representation of the dynast, crony and obstructionist. Dio, it seems, had not one single reason for choosing this procedure. For Dio's knowledge of Cicero's *De lege Manilia*, see n. 21 below.

10 Catulus acts as spokesman for the concerns expressed by the conservative *optimates* (Cass. Dio 36.31–35). In regard to the *lex Manilia*, there is no direct speech at all; it is only noted that this motion aroused opposition on the part of the *optimates*, since it

lex Manilia, Cicero, who had carefully not yet declared his position on the *lex Gabinia*,[11] sides with the *populares*, as does Caesar (36.43.2).[12] By opting for this policy, the two are furthering their own interests instead of pursuing the interests of the state.

Dio, however, rightly notes a crucial difference. Caesar sides with the people because he has recognized their superior power and because he is seeking a future special command for himself by establishing this precedent.[13] At the same time, he already wishes to further his long-term goal of making Pompey a hated object of envy (36.43.3–4).[14] As Dio expressly notes, at this very same time Cicero is making his first moves to occupy a leading position in the state on the basis of the office of praetor[15] to which he has been appointed. Unlike the cool, purposeful, and calculating Caesar, who has placed all his bets on the people, Cicero practices a dual and highly risky strategy. He wishes to win over both social strata in equal measure by the eloquence of his rhetoric alone. He pursues a dual strategy aimed at acquiring prestige among both parties. Appearing for the very first time as a politician, the man who has made his interest in pursuing a senatorial career abundantly clear, defects to the mob (36.43.4–5),[16] a blatant volte-face. Cicero had previously declared his preference for the office of aedile rather than that of a tribune of the plebs. Direct comparison with Caesar's political instinct illustrates the point. Cicero's counterproductive style of policymaking is driven by his craving for recognition[17] and, as such, forms the real point of criticism. Caesar's intentions may be the result of cold calculation, but they are noted without comment. The Manilius

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also meant the dismissal of Marcius and Acilius before their command expired (Cass. Dio 36.43.1–2). Generally, for the dangers connected with *imperia extraordinaria*, see Arena 2012, 179–200.

11 Plutarch, too, notes that only the quaestor Caesar supported the request of Gabinius, albeit for populist motives (Plut. *Pomp*. 25.4).

12 The people, referred to in derogatory terms as ὄμιλος, are persuaded by Caesar and Cicero to accept the motion.

13 Just one year later, after having ingratiated himself to the people through his *munificentia* in his capacity as aedile, he tried to push through a popular decision to be granted an *extraordinarium imperium* in Egypt (Suet. *Jul*. 11).

14 The people are referred to here in even more derogatory terms: ὄχλος.

15 Cicero holds the office of praetor in the year 66 (Cass. Dio 36.44.1). He will be elected consul just two years later.

16 In a further gradual escalation, the people whom Cicero supports are described as the common rabble (οἱ συρφετώδεις).

17 For the inability of the senatorial aristocracy to effectively govern the state and for personal interests contributing to the collapse of the republic, see Madsen and Potter in this volume.

affair lingered on. Dio's account reveals Cicero as a target for criticism in comparison to Caesar as a smooth and slick operator.

Not all the details in this somewhat unclear report (36.44.1–2) are understandable.[18] It appears that a lawsuit[19] was brought by the aristocrats against Manilius. In connection with this litigation, Cicero reverses policy. First, he thwarts Manilius' attempts to delay the proceedings. Then, in his role as acting praetor, he defers the hearing to the following day. As official justification, he declares that the year is coming to an end. The public is enraged upon hearing the announcement. This, in turn, causes Cicero to appear before the *contio*. According to his own statement, he is forced by the tribunes to take this step. Once there, he unleashes a burst of abusive tirades against the Senate and promises the people to speak in support of Manilius. As a result, he earns a bad reputation and is universally stigmatized as a turncoat. The immediate outbreak of civil unrest, however, prevents the pronouncement of a judicial verdict. It is difficult to obtain an accurate idea of what actually happened on the basis of this report. The attempt must, therefore, be made to cast light on the historical background.

What is certain is that this report takes us back to the year 66. It is the same year in which the *rogatio* was applied to the *lex Manilia*. In this year, Cicero held the office of praetor, and Manilius, that of tribune of the plebs. December 66 is reached with the legal proceedings against Manilius initiated by the *optimates*. The tribunate of Manilius ended on 10 December. After that, he could be put on trial. Dio records that the *optimates* were behind this move. Hence it can probably be assumed that this was an act of retaliation against the author of the *lex Manilia*, a piece of legislation that was directed against the interests of the Senate. Even so, it was certainly not the Senate as a whole which acted in this way, but rather the conservative faction, and probably some personal opponents of Manilius, too. The lawsuit could not fail to have had an effect on Cicero; after all, he had lent his support to the *lex Manilia* in his speech *De imperio Cn. Pompei* (*De lege Manilia*). Probably, however, this lawsuit was also aimed, at least in part, against Cicero. He had no other option than to respond, simply because he was the current praetor responsible for *repetundae* trials. Time was of the essence, of course, because his term of office was now coming to an end. So, what should he do?

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18 I do not entirely understand the slightly divergent explanations of Gelzer 1939, 858 and Gelzer 1969, 60.

19 Only Plutarch (Plut. *Cic.* 9.4) specifies that there was a lawsuit for embezzlement (κλοπῆς). Cicero, in his role as praetor, therefore, was required to lead the *quaestio repetundarum*. Only on 28 December, the penultimate day of his term of office, did Cicero become aware of the dire situation confronting him.

According to Dio's account, Cicero does not care at all at first about the man whose *rogatio* he had supported only recently. Rather, he chooses to side unequivocally with the *optimates*. So, he prevents Manilius' attempts to delay the trial. He does so in order to curry favour with the *optimates*, whom he had alienated by supporting the *lex Manilia*. He has, it seems, already his mind on his rise to the office of consul, for which especially the *homo novus* needed the support of the *optimates*.[20] But then he reverses his policy again and promises to act on behalf of Manilius. He pursues a policy of shady tricks, one that was equally resented by both the *optimates* and the people alike.

Dio is following here the tradition of unfriendly historical accounts written about Cicero, which for the purposes of his narrative he took to be authoritative.[21] In particular, the disparaging characterization of Cicero as a turncoat (αὐτόμολος) is a reproach that can be traced far back in time to the invective against Cicero which was attributed to Sallust.[22] Dio's Cicero will subsequently confirm the reputation that has now been ascribed to him at a later stage in Gabinius' trial, and it will become hardened in public opinion.[23] It is

20 See the *Commentariolum petitionis* (Laser 2001), esp. chapters 5 and 51 (they are very revealing in terms of the process deployed to attract the *optimates* and the people alike). A letter (Cic. *Att.* 1.1.1–2: July 65) shows how meticulously Cicero calculated his chances of reaching the office of consul beforehand.

21 By way of comparison, we have Plutarch's account (Plut. *Cic.* 9.4–7; followed by Grimal 1988, 162–163). It focuses on the correct way in which Cicero takes decisions in his capacity as praetor. Rodgers 2008, 296 and 308–309 believes that Dio consulted and mined Cicero's *De lege Manilia* to create arguments for the speeches of Pompeius, Gabinius and Catulus in the earlier debate in 67 (*lex Gabinia*). For this Burden-Strevens 2017, 121–135 provides the strongest possible arguments. Dio may well have known this speech. There is evidence that it was still read long after the Severan period (see Montecalvo 2014, 45–46). But in his narrative, Dio followed those sources (Greek and Latin) to which he had access. Although, in spite of much scholarly work done on this subject, they still remain unknown, they must have strongly differed from those of Plutarch, which also included sources favourable towards Cicero. For the *lex Gabinia* as the first step in the dissolution of the Republic, see n. 9 above.

22 Used to discredit Cicero, the label *transfuga* already appears in [Sall.] *In Cic.* 4.7 to great effect at the end of the invective. In regard to the discussion on authenticity, see Vretska 1961, 12–26 and Novokhatko 2009, 111–129. Most editors since Vretska have not supported Sallustian authorship. Recently Keeline 2018, 148–149 and 154–155 claims that the pseudo-Sallustian *Invectiva in Ciceronem* is "almost certainly" (148) a product of the rhetorical schools. He concludes (158): "And yet again such criticisms will pass from the rhetorical schools into the literary and historical tradition in writers like Dio." I do not believe that the author (maybe a supporter of Antonius?) of this text pursues no political aims at all. A comprehensive discussion of authorship and date of composition would be necessary, as far as this is possible.

23 Cicero accuses Gabinius (Cass. Dio 39.59.3 and 39.62.2), but under pressure from Pompey then is forced to take over Gabinius' defense (Cass. Dio 39.63.2–5). Once more Dio is right enough simply to state the matter of Cicero's reputation.

on this basis that Calenus will ultimately use the description αὐτόμολος in his response to Cicero's speech against Antonius – as an evident statement of a fact known to all (46.3.4). Hence the slur is one of topical character.[24] However, it is not pronounced by the authorial Dio himself. Instead, it is conveyed through the medium of the outside world.[25] Hence Dio does not assume full responsibility for it. He has been influenced far too much by "his" Thucydides[26] to be unaware of the subtle difference between direct and indirect characterization.

2 Cicero's Political Successes and Failures

Even the long tradition of critiques aimed at Cicero – beginning with Asinius Pollio – was not completely negative. It tended to be ambivalent rather than consistently hostile.[27] Hence in the case of the Catilinarian conspiracy,[28] Dio's

24 Cf. App. *BCiv.* 3.1.4; 3.8.56, 59; 3.13.92.

25 Cass. Dio 36.44.2: αὐτόμολος ὠνομάζετο. Dio's method of indirect characterization is neglected by Welch 2019, 105.

26 Litsch 1893; Kyhnitzsch 1894; Lintott 1997, 2498–2501. It must be noted that Dio not only had many other literary models as well (for example, Demosthenes), but also skillfully employed the technique of cultural cross-fertilization (Gotteland 2015).

27 Asinius Pollio appraised Cicero far more objectively in his historical work than in the polemical speeches (Sen. *Suas*. 6.15; Zecchini 1982, 1285, n. 90; Feddern 2013, 428). His obituary (Sen. *Suas*. 6.24) recognizes Cicero's talent and diligence. Criticism is only directed at his personal weaknesses, such as his lack of moral fiber in good and bad times, and at the fact that while Cicero was good at handing out criticism, he found it impossible to accept it of himself. As with Dio, the criticism here is confined to a personal level. Outside the obituary, however, the criticism was less friendly (Seneca's suggestive hint in *Suas*. 6.25 is not taken into account by Hose 1994, 263–264). Livy also offers an ambivalent picture of Cicero. In this regard, the *Periocha* 111 (to the third book of the civil wars; year 48) explicitly mentions Cicero's unwarlike nature. Livy's obituary of Cicero (Sen. *Suas*. 6.17, esp. 22; probably from the 120th book; Feddern 2013, 434 and 450) contains double-edged praise (Homeyer 1977, 79–80, 84–86). For a balanced discussion see Sillett 2015, 144–161. The assessment offered in early imperial Latin historiography is mainly appreciative (Cremutius Cordus and Aufidius Bassus). It emerges, in abridged form, in the case of Florus. Velleius Paterculus is even enthusiastic. Keeline 2018, 130–146 (dealing with the death of Cicero) offers an explanation for this. He argues that Seneca the Elder and the declaimers read the accounts of Livy and Asinius Pollio as uniformly laudatory and that these declamations of the Roman rhetorical schools influenced the historical version of Cicero. Further he argues that this declamatory tradition, directly or indirectly, has left its mark also on Greek biography and historiography (Plutarch, Appian, and Dio).

28 Urso 2019 observes the differences between Dio's account on the one hand and those of Cicero and Sallust on the other and concludes that Dio made use of a wealth of valuable and often underestimated sources originating in the late republican period. Urso also underlines the fact that many of them transported an anti-Ciceronian bias. But there are also many correspondences between Dio and the Catilinarian speeches which indicate

assessment of Cicero is certainly appreciative (37.29–42).[29] He appears to be very well-informed, and is not only prudent but also vigilant. Cicero can always escape attempts on his life. That he turns down the province of Macedonia which had been assigned to him to the benefit of his consular colleague and rejects Gaul to the benefit of Metellus is praised as a beneficial decision for the Romans in this precarious situation (37.33.4–34.1).[30] Even the first steps against Catiline are taken on Cicero's initiative, but they do not come about without the Senate having taken a previous decision.[31] In particular, Cicero does not apply the death penalty to the conspirators[32] himself. Rather, he is exonerated from taking sole responsibility for what is actually an illegal measure (37.42.2)[33] because sentence had already been passed on the basis of a majority vote in the Senate (37.35.4–36.3).[34] In this matter, Cicero acts in line with Cato, who manages to prevail over Caesar's countermotion.

Whereas Cicero behaves correctly, Caesar exploits this dire situation with his populism in order to further his own interests (37.37). Moreover, while the people regard Caesar – undeservedly – as a winner, the innocent Cicero faces the full wrath of the masses at the death of the conspirators. This blatant injustice is recorded in these words: "Toward Caesar, accordingly, the masses were well disposed, for the reasons given, but they were angry at Cicero for the death of the citizens" (37.38.1: τῷ μὲν οὖν Καίσαρι διὰ ταῦθ' οἱ πολλοὶ προσφιλεῖς ἦσαν, τὸν δὲ δὴ Κικέρωνα ἐν ὀργῇ ἐπὶ τῷ τῶν πολιτῶν θανάτῳ ποιούμενοι). This contrast of the two quite different men shows that it is not Dio's intention to rigorously downplay Cicero's serious commitment to the state.[35] But what he also

that they were not only known to him (Cass. Dio 37.42.1), but also that he exploited many of them (see Montecalvo 2014, 145–159), although he explicitly declares them to be unduly exaggerated.

29 Cf. already Asinius Pollio (Sen. *Suas*. 6.24).

30 Cf. Cass. Dio 38.28.4 (with Philiscus as speaker).

31 His first step in acting against Catiline is to have an additional clause included in the criminal laws against bribery. Catiline rightly interprets this move as being directed at him (Cass. Dio 37.29.1–2). For a different interpretation, see Coudry 2019, 44 and 47 who views Dio as systematically minimizing Cicero's action; similarly, Lindholmer 2019, 87–89.

32 Among them Publius Cornelius Lentulus, in whose house Marcus Antonius grew up. Plut. *Ant*. 2.1 attributes Antonius' enmity towards Cicero to this fact.

33 In any case, this is asserted, by Metellus Nepos in particular, before the people.

34 Cf. Cass. Dio 38.25.2 (with Philiscus as speaker). Cicero himself provided a statement of facts that emphasized the consensus in the Senate (*Phil*. 2.5.11–6.14).

35 Somewhat qualified by Dio's explanation that the Catilinarian speeches, combined with the speaker's reputation, made the plot appear larger than it actually was (Cass. Dio 37.42.1). For Cicero and Caesar as complementary figures, see n. 50 below; for Cicero's not uniformly dishonest commitment to the state, see how Dio models his amnesty speech and his Philippic speech (see also n. 78 below).

notes here critically, is Cicero's propensity towards self-praise (37.38.2). Even so, this is a minor weakness of negligible importance given the unreservedly acknowledged competence of Cicero as consul. His resolute action against the Catilinarians is wholeheartedly commended in Appian[36] and Plutarch,[37] too.

Four years later, in the years 59 and 58, Cicero is very much back in the spotlight. This concerns the narrative passage preceding the Philiscus-Cicero diatribe (38.9–17). It explains why Cicero was able to find himself in the invidious situation of being in exile. He becomes an object of suspicion due to the alleged but never actually proven attempt to assassinate Caesar and Pompey.[38] Cicero reinforces this impression by defending the scandalous governorship of Gaius Antonius,[39] his former colleague in the consulship. As if that was not enough, he begins railing against Caesar. The latter does not react openly to this, knowing full well that Cicero is only out to provoke and drag him down to his level (38.11.2).[40] Instead, he surreptitiously has Clodius do everything possible to exploit Cicero's points of weakness (38.12.4–7).

In Cicero's public image Clodius recognizes a suitable tool for proceeding against him. On the surface, Cicero occupies a powerful position in the state through his fierce eloquence. But below the surface what Clodius sees is the fragility of an invented façade. The latter is evident in the fact that Cicero has no real friends because of his habit of intimidating others with his rhetoric. Even those he successfully represents in court are probably not his allies because, by virtue of the *conditio humana*, the recipients of his proven favour are not friends to the same degree as the victims of his hurtful rhetoric are eager for retribution. With this anthropological explanation, the historian who is well-trained in Thucydides now speaks up. In the following, it is he and he alone as an authorial persona who pronounces his verdict on Cicero. Thus, in Dio's opinion, it is Cicero himself who has created adversaries by his incessant presumptuousness in abusively castigating even the most powerful of men. He further arouses antagonism *ad nauseam* by not moderating his words

36 App. *BCiv.* 2.1.6–7 (Cato, whose strength of character is highly praised in 2.14.99, lauds Cicero's achievement); cf. the epilogue on Cicero (*BCiv.* 4.4.20).

37 He ends the Catilinarian conspiracy without unleashing strife among the citizenry. For this he is recognized by Cato (Plut. *Cic.* 22.7 and 23.6). Early imperial Roman historiography had already arrived at the same assessment (Vell. 2.34.3–35.4).

38 Lintott 1997, 2513 attributes this to Dio's "false inferences."

39 C. Antonius Hybrida, uncle of M. Antonius, who was attacked by Cicero in the Philippic speeches. Juv. 3.8.105–107 names him together with Dolabella and Verres as three examples of unscrupulous exploitation in the provinces.

40 This criticism cannot be found either in Appian or in Plutarch's biography, where Cicero appears as a political force in his own right to a greater degree than in Dio's account.

regardless of his opponent,[41] in a breathtaking display of unprecedented intellectual arrogance that refuses to accept the validity of others' views. At the same time, he is a braggart, intent on building up a public *imago* of moral integrity and, in addition, a combination of exceptional intellectual and rhetorical brilliance through his self-promotion (38.12.6: δόξαν τοῦ δύνασθαι συνεῖναί τε καὶ εἰπεῖν ἃ μηδεὶς ἄλλος). With the stinging words συνεῖναί τε καὶ εἰπεῖν, Dio may here be alluding to Pericles' famous self-characterization which Thucydides ascribes to him in his third and final speech. There, Pericles says of himself that no one can match his ability to recognize the essential and put it into words (Th. 2.60.5: γνῶναί τε τὰ δέοντα καὶ ἑρμηνεῦσαι ταῦτα).[42] This borrowing is all the more likely because the speaker Pericles continues to describe himself as a patriot (φιλόπολις). Although Dio's Cicero also claims moral authority for himself, this is just a façade (δοκεῖν).[43]

In the following, Dio illustrates the degree to which Cicero's self-perception differs from his actual political expertise in the game of intrigues of the time. He allows himself to be duped by Clodius, and even more so by the two driven and power-hungry politicians, Caesar and Pompey. To prevent the worst, he is ready to undergo any form of self-degradation (38.14.7).[44] He lurches erratically from fear to confidence and back. Even at the moment of being expelled from the capital, he still believes he has beaten his adversaries (38.16.1–2). Yet ultimately all he achieves through his ham-fisted actions is his expulsion from Rome under a cloud of disgrace and shame. Moreover, it appears to the outside world that he has fled voluntarily on the basis of guilt (38.17.4). In this regard, authorial explanations on Dio's part concerning Cicero and historical *narratio* form a sometimes interrelated and reciprocal entity. What Dio wishes to explore here is the disparity between appearance and reality, the "knowledge

41 This includes the propensity towards mockery and ridicule, which Plutarch addresses centrally, and which Cicero practiced so excessively and baselessly that he is said to have provoked feelings of hatred among those he had offended; furthermore, he had abandoned the principle of reasonableness (Plut. *Cic.* 25.1; 27.1; 28.1; *Comp. Dem. et Cic.* 1.4). Dio (43.46. 4) also draws attention to Cicero's pointed ridicule. He writes that Cicero had learned something from his unfortunate experiences after being recalled from exile. He now devises a way to conceal his bluntness (Cass. Dio 39.10.2–3). On the other hand, this does not prevent him from engaging in a further violent dispute with Clodius (Cass. Dio 39.21.3).

42 This is reproduced with συνεῖναί τε καὶ εἰπεῖν in the literature of the imperial period; see Luc. *Hist. conscr.* 37.

43 However, according to Plut. *Cic.* 49.5, Augustus posthumously conceded to him the attribute of a φιλόπατρις, and Caesar compared him to Pericles and Theramenes in his *Anticato* (Plut. *Cic.* 39.5–6).

44 App. *BCiv.* 2.3.15 puts it even more drastically, though it is ruled out in Plut. *Cic.* 31.6.

gap" between "his Cicero" and the readers of his text who learn the historical consequences of which Cicero was unaware.[45] This is the most negative thing that the authorial Dio has to say about Cicero. The end of this study will show that Philiscus' subsequent diatribe (which follows immediately) is intended to counterbalance this highly exaggerated assessment which stresses Cicero's weakest side: his relative naivety in regard to *Realpolitik* when compared to genuine political heavyweights. But it must be noted that, whereas Caesar[46] and Pompey[47] are portrayed as liars, Cicero is not.[48] The mendacious speech delivered by Caesar at Vesontio (38.34–47) tellingly will follow only 20 chapters later. Dio, it seems, depicts Cicero and Caesar as opposite, but for transporting his historical and political agenda[49] equally suitable persons.[50]

3 Cicero's Politics after Caesar's Death

Cicero steps down as a player in the Civil War. We only learn that he joins Pompey's camp together with other senators. There are two reasons why they decide to join Pompey. First, they think he may be more in the right than the opposing party. Second, they see in him the future winner (41.18.4). After the battle of Pharsalus, Cicero, along with others, immediately moves back to Rome (42.10.2). It is striking how passive Cicero's behaviour is in the military confrontation. Dio's intention is to show how incapable the orator is of influencing the course of events that have just been set in motion or even how unwilling he is to do so. According to Appian's account (*BCiv.* 2.5.36), however, Cicero advocates sending intermediaries. Plutarch[51] has Cicero trying to

45 For the "knowledge gap" technique see Peer 2020, 222–223. I do not agree that this technique is a distinctive characteristic of Dio's speeches alone.

46 Kemezis 2016; for Caesar's hypocrisy, see also Rich 2020, 69–74.

47 Coudry 2016, 38–41.

48 In this respect I agree with Peer 2020, 223, who views Dio's Cicero as a misguided politician, but not as a liar.

49 Especially valuable are Kemezis 2014, 111–112; Kemezis 2016; Burden-Strevens 2016; Burden-Strevens 2017.

50 They are the only people who get speeches in Dio's whole narrative of the 50s–40s. Mallan 2016, 263 has observed that they are complementary figures in that Caesar is able to dissimulate his intentions and plans, whereas Cicero's defining characteristic is his frankness (παρρησία). On how Caesar and Cicero are treated in close juxtaposition, see Pelling 2006, 260; see also n. 35 above.

51 Plut. *Cic.* 37.1. After much inconclusive dithering (Plutarch refers to Cicero's letters at 37.2–4), Cicero finally decides to cast his lot in with Pompey, for which Cato criticizes him.

influence Caesar by counselling him in a letter. In the case of Pompey, Cicero resorts to earnest pleas.[52]

We learn more about Cicero again after Caesar's murder.[53] Immediately after the Ides of March, the killers urge the distraught populace not to be afraid. The assassins constantly call for Cicero (44.20.4).[54] Immediately afterwards, Cicero gives a conciliatory speech in the Temple of Tellus, in which he successfully calls for an amnesty (44.23–33). For the moment, the only unresolved matter is the significance of the perpetrators' naming of Cicero. The attentive reader retains the impression that Cicero is somehow involved in the assassination. But Dio does nothing to clear up this point, and we are left only with a vague suspicion. This is reinforced by a nagging question. Why is it that Dio's Cicero has a statesmanlike speech ready so soon after the murder? Is he presented as having prepared the speech a long time since? Does that mean he is actively involved in the assassination or at least privy to the plot? As Dio's sources in this respect may have been somehow ambiguous, the only way to obtain clarity in this regard is to draw on evidence that lies outside the text itself. For in a letter written by Cicero to Cassius dated September 44 (Cic. *Fam*. 12.2.1), the former credibly rejects Antonius' assertion[55] that he was the mastermind behind the murder. The allegation is absurd, Cicero asserts. But the fact that he was delighted by the deed *per se* is indicated in the brief message he wrote immediately afterwards to the co-conspirator L. Minucius Basilus (Cic. *Fam*. 6.15: *Tibi gratulor, mihi gaudeo*).[56] This may make the real Cicero a sympathizer, and even an intellectual enabler, but not a perpetrator.

The decisive turning point in Cicero's life occurs when he seeks closer ties to Octavian (45.15.4).[57] He supports this up-and-coming politician with his words and deeds. And he does so out of his hatred for Antonius. Although he was

52 Vell. 2.48.5 already has him appear here as advocate of the *concordia publica*.

53 That Cicero's fortunes were again in the ascendant after Caesar's death is also noted by App. *BCiv.* 4.4.19, though with the restriction: ὅση γένοιτο ἂν δημαγωγοῦ μοναρχία.

54 Calenus discusses this as if it were a well-known fact (Cass. Dio 46.22.4). The charge that Cicero was the immediate instigator of the murder is levelled solely by him. As a declared follower of Antonius he not only presents a great deal of polemical matter, but also some assertions that are not supported in Dio's authorial text.

55 Cf. Cic. *Phil*. 2.12.28–30: Cicero rejects Antonius' allegation of 17 September 44 (made in his absence) that he had incited Caesar's assassination. Yet he openly confesses his deep satisfaction at hearing about the event.

56 Further evidence is submitted in Gelzer 1969, 326, n. 13.

57 Plutarch (Plut. *Cic*. 46.1) is puzzled that the elderly Cicero is so fooled by the Young Caesar merely because of the tantalizing prospect that he might again resume the office of consul. Appian (*BCiv.* 3.11.82) also explains this with Cicero's greedy ambition to be in high office.

in the middle of accompanying his son on the occasion of the latter's study trip to Athens, Cicero turns back the moment he realizes that Octavian and Antonius have become enemies. His fighting spirit is only now rekindled,[58] and, as it turns out, for the final time. For soon after, an omen points to Cicero's imminent death. The statue of Minerva, which he had consecrated before his banishment at the Capitol, collapses and shatters into pieces during a storm (45.17.3). This is the second foreshadowing of his death. Philiscus had already predicted in a *vaticinium ex eventu* what would happen if Cicero continued to engage in politics (38.29.2–3). Cicero had not heeded this advice. Later, he will also be unresponsive to Calenus' warning not to destroy himself and the city with his politics (46.28.6). Now events are moving irrevocably towards the predicted end. Cicero can see through the plans of Calenus and the other followers of Antonius in Rome (46.32.3–4). Yet his decision to turn to Octavian now seals his fate. He supports the latter's aspirations to become consul, lured by the prospect of becoming a co-consul himself. Cicero does not heed Philiscus' earlier warning that holding the office of consul just once was already a lifetime achievement (38.28.3). As prior to his banishment, Cicero has once again been duped because he knows nothing of Octavian's collusion with Antonius and the establishment of the fateful so-called second triumvirate (46.42.2).

Dio reproduces the essential kernel of two of Cicero's speeches in direct form. Both are from the time when Cicero again acquired great political influence for just over a year in the aftermath of Caesar's death. The speeches reveal two characteristic sides of the man. On the one hand, he displays a demonstrably conciliatory attitude that conjures up the *concordia ordinum*. On the other, there is a sharpness that does not shy away from personal invective when it comes to destroying an enemy in Antonius. As always with Dio, such individual traits are spread across different parts. Time and again, we only receive one certain aspect at any given moment, but in general, a coherent overall picture emerges: Cicero's struggle to preserve the *res publica libera* by using a wide range of different means.[59] Both speeches are characterized by the leeway

58 Cicero himself cites the reason for his return in the newly awakened hope for a peaceful solution (*Phil.* 1.3.7–4.11).

59 In this sense the two speeches hardly can be labelled contradictory, as Peer 2020, 225 believes. Her interpretation of the speech (233–230) differs essentially from the one presented here in that she thinks that Dio mirrored in it his own heartfelt disagreement with the republican idea. In my view, he wanted to deliver a balanced and thus not so unfavourable portrait of the historical Cicero as he saw him; on this, see n. 8 above. But, as Kemezis 2014, 11 convincingly argues, Dio also wanted to show that under the late republic even this kind of not completely self-interested rhetoric could not have a decisive impact on events; most of Dio's speeches should consequently be read as dramatic irony; see also Rich 2019, 221.

granted to ancient historians, which was to render their accounts of speeches with far greater authorial imagination than their narrative accounts. Dio uses the opportunity of presenting the speeches to appraise Cicero in a slightly more sympathetic manner. While Cicero's personal shortcomings are certainly not ignored, the emphasis is placed more on his commitment to the state.

The first of the two speeches is the amnesty speech (44.23–33). The situation concerned is a consultation on the current situation in the Senate immediately after Caesar's assassination. Different views are expressed. Yet Cicero wins the day, as we are informed right at the start. His artful speech constantly circles around a few central points which he repeatedly drills into his listeners. What they hear is the exhortation that so long as evil is still in the offing, there is a need to act immediately. What Cicero believes to be the last possible chance to save the *res publica* must not be allowed to pass by. The prerequisite for this, he says, is the concord (ὁμόνοια)[60] of the citizenry as it used to exist in bygone times in the interests of protecting the welfare of the state. What has happened cannot be undone. But it is possible to save what can be saved by exercising prudence. The past should be forgotten, no accounts should be vindictively settled nor grudges held (μὴ μνησικακεῖν ἀλλήλοις); amnesty should be granted mutually (44.32.1; 26.4; 34.1). Cicero can invoke a famous historical example, the amnesty that had been established in Athens between the oligarchs and the democrats in 403 (44.26.1–6). Xenophon had offered a report on this with similar words (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.43); the subject is dealt with on a paradigmatic level in Plato's *Menexenus* (*Menex.* 243e–244b), of which Cicero was demonstrably aware (*Orat*. 44.151).

Striking about Cicero's argument in Dio is how inordinately often the call not to instigate vindictive investigations is repeated in almost the same words (esp. 44.23.4, 32.1–4). Cicero pre-empts the suspicion that this speech is designed to please Caesar's murderers by pointing out his customary disposition towards the welfare of the community (44.33.1–2). In this specific case, he demonstrates the great service he offers the public by tabling the motion that immunity (ἄδεια) also be granted to all those who were in the possession of unjust and undeserved privileges under Caesar contrary to the *mos maiorum* (44.33.3–4). What appears as a generous concession, however, is actually more of a pragmatic decision. Many people had benefited from Caesar's policy.

60 The idea of *concordia* had been one of Cicero's most crucial thoughts ever since his year as consul (Strasburger 1956, 39). Asirvatham 2020 shows that in Dio the cult as well as the abstraction *concordia* tends to appear as a bad omen and as a signal of doom in civil war contexts.

Given the tense situation, they could not be antagonized.[61] Overall, Dio lets his Cicero speak as a diplomatic statesman, one who knows what is required in a critical situation.[62] We are unaware, though, of the speech which was actually delivered. It is not possible, therefore, to fully determine Dio's personal contribution. However, it is known that Cicero really did give a speech on amnesty in this situation.[63] In it, he invoked the Athenian amnesty of 403 (Plut. *Cic*. 42.3; Vell. 2.58.4). Cicero himself reports it at a central point (*Phil*. 1.1.1).[64] Dio was aware of that speech:[65] He must have known its general argumentative outline, which concentrates on the idea of *concordia*, and one may reasonably guess that he had read the speech itself, although there is no evidence that it was still known, read and available to him.

Cicero's second, even more extensive speech (45.18–47) is delivered under an ominous sign. For an omen had already predicted Cicero's death (45.17.3) and all sorts of oracles had foreshadowed the downfall of the Republic (45.17.6).[66] His far too favourable assessment of Octavian[67] will soon prove a calamitous illusion. The oration is modelled along the lines of Cicero's Philippic speeches. Dio summarizes their essence in a single speech.[68] It is, therefore, possible to outline how Dio proceeded in his conception of the summary speech.

The factual basis is provided by Cicero's third Philippic speech[69] which he delivered in the Senate on 20 December in the year 44. Three moments have been taken from the model. First, the fact that Antonius has already begun

61 Cicero confesses to Atticus that the compromise was dictated by fear. Evidence is submitted by Gelzer 1969, 327, n. 29.

62 Almost six months later (on 2 September 44), Cicero will justify preserving the *acta Caesaris* by emphasizing the utmost need to ensure peace (*Phil*. 1.7.16).

63 App. *BCiv.* 2.19.142, but here the initiative lies with Antonius (2.18.134–135); see also Plut. *Ant*. 14.2 (date given: 17 March 44).

64 He also praises Antonius for initially advocating *concordia* on the same occasion (Cic. *Phil*. 1.1.2 and 1.13.31).

65 See also Burden-Strevens 2017, 141–142. For different opinions see Montecalvo 2014, 313–315. This speech is not dealt with by Keeline 2018. It would be difficult to detect in it traces of the declamatory tradition.

66 Dio's portents appear oriented towards the state and function as constant reminders of risk; on this, see Stewart in this volume.

67 In a letter dated 3 February 43 he praises Octavian (*Fam*. 10.28.3: *puer egregius Caesar; de quo spero equidem reliqua*).

68 Burden-Strevens 2017, 123 compares Sallust's collapsing of Catiline's two speeches into one. Montecalvo 2014, 379–406 offers a long list of coincidences between Dio's speech of Cicero and Cicero's Philippic speeches. Recently Keeline 2018, 178–182 has concentrated on the declamatory tradition.

69 Gudeman 1971, 24, n. 2. is inaccurate on this point.

military attacks against Decimus Brutus.[70] Then, the recent decree of Decimus Brutus, in which he promises to place his province of Gaul under the custodianship of the Senate.[71] Finally, there is further correspondence in that it was only the military protection requested by the tribunes of the plebs which had allowed senators freedom of expression.[72] The initial situation for Dio's conception of the speech is, therefore, the moment when the historical Cicero intuits his chance to be politically effective once more, with all the concentrated might of his combative rhetoric before the Senate and the people. At the same time, the unauthorized military activities of Antonius against Decimus Brutus offer him the chance to propose in the Senate that Antonius be declared an enemy of the state.[73]

Dio also borrows an element from the first speech of 2 September 44, one still moderate in its tone. It describes Cicero's rationale for his departure from Rome and his return.[74] As a matter of fact, the first speech was already too offensive for Antonius.[75] On 19 September, he delivered a hate-filled tirade directed at the absent Cicero.[76] The latter responded with a sharp invective published at the end of November (the *Second Philippic*). Although it was not delivered as a speech, it effectively represents a clear challenge. Dio extracts signs of personal character traits from the pamphlet[77] but ignores its general abusive tone. He prefers to build a more respectful memorial to Cicero on the basis of Cicero's Philippic speeches.[78]

70 Cf. Cic. *Phil.* 3.1.1 and 3.12.31 with Cass. Dio 45, esp. 24.3 and 34.5.

71 Cf. Cic. *Phil.* 3.4.8 with Cass. Dio 45.34.6. For Cicero, this was the entire reason for going to the 20 December meeting at the Senate (Cic. *Fam.* 11.6.2: letter to Decimus Brutus, 20 December 44).

72 Cf. Cic. *Phil.* 3, esp. 3.6; 5.13; 11.28; 15.37 with Cass. Dio 45, esp. 19.1–2 and 22.5. Cicero (*Fam.* 11.6.2) concurs; he marks the start of freedom of speech with Antonius' withdrawal from Rome (*Fam.* 10.28.1).

73 This is the pivotal theme in Cicero's third Philippic speech (esp. 6.14; 8.21). Antonius is attacked as a *hostis* and denied the rank of consul. Octavian, however, merely requires a confirmation through the *auctoritas* of the Senate for sanctioning his (*de facto* not legalized) counteractivities. For this see the comprehensive discussion by Lange 2016b, 111–114 and 256–257 (notes with rich bibliography).

74 Cic. *Phil* 1.1.1–4.11. In Cass. Dio 45.18.1 barely anything of Cicero's extensive rationale remains apart from a literary reference.

75 Cic. *Phil.* 5.7.19 (Antonius was not present).

76 Cic. *Fam.* 12.2.1 (to Cassius in late September 44) and 12.25a.4 (to Cornificius on 20 March 43). Cf. Cic. *Phil.* 5.7.19–20 (Antonius' propensity towards violence).

77 For this aspect see Burden-Strevens 2017, 135–137, who compares the speeches of Cicero and Dio and concludes that Dio clearly modelled his invective of Cicero upon the *Second Philippic* in argument, structure, and phrasing (137).

78 Mallan 2016, 265 rightly states that the speech contains some noble sentiments, and that the criticism of Antonius is justified.

Dio's working method must be defined with even greater accuracy. Significantly, the purview of "his" speech exceeds the timeframe of Cicero's third speech. For him, Antonius' siege of Mutina is already a firmly established fact.[79] Hence, we arrive at the year 43. It may be useful to recall the historical facts. On 1 January 43, Antonius left Decimus Brutus trapped in Mutina and began the siege, while Octavian advanced against him with the troops he had recruited on his own account and with other soldiers who had defected to him from Antonius. That same day, Cicero delivered his fifth speech in the Senate. It deals with the question of whether a delegation should be dispatched to Antonius. After delivering their addresses, the new consuls Hirtius and Pansa then yielded the floor to Calenus. This loyal friend of Antonius spoke in favour of going down the path of negotiations. Cicero replied to him in an uncompromising speech, in which he declared that Antonius was an enemy and should also be treated as such. The resolution to declare war was rejected after four days of debate.

So much for the historical facts as documented in Cicero's fifth speech. Dio, who does not provide a timeline, has these events reflected in the final part of Cicero's speech (45.43.1–46.2). His Cicero also strongly rejects the proposed opening of negotiations. He declares that that would be as shameful as it would be dangerous, that it would weaken the combat morale of the allies. He urges Calenus and the other Antonians to act impartially in the interests of the state. In Dio's account, the most probable timeline of events is indicated in two ways. First, through the statement that the siege of Mutina had already been in progress for a long time (45.42.2).[80] Second, by describing the dispatch of the two consuls to Mutina as an act envisaged for the future (45.42.4). Furthermore, the historical facts can also be inferred from Cicero. First, Hirtius left for Mutina. He departed sometime in late January 43, during the days before Cicero gave his eighth speech. Pansa followed him at the end of March 43. This exhausts all the factual evidence which the text provides for a fictitious date of the speech conceived by Dio. The two battles of Mutina in April 43[81] are ignored.

In its sharpness and rhetorical brilliance, the speech delivered by Dio's Cicero is worthy of the real Cicero himself. But it gets into legally dubious territory at the point where Cicero speaks out in favour of Octavian's barely legal

79 Esp. Cass. Dio 45.36.3, 42.2, 45.2; less emphatically 45.24.3, 34.5–6, 37.1, 38.6.

80 The reader must assume a certain amount of exaggeration for the sake of achieving a rhetorical effect.

81 The battle of Forum Gallorum took place on 15 April 43. In it, Pansa suffered a fatal wound. On April 21, Cicero delivered the fourteenth and last of his series of speeches. The battle of Mutina took place on 27 April. Hirtius, the second consul, died in the fighting.

solo effort. Cicero is arguing on two levels here.[82] First, on the level of the law. Though empowered neither by the Senate nor the populace, Antonius has launched a war against the allies. Octavian and Decimus Brutus, however, are spared from such criticism. Their private initiatives are welcomed on a moral level. However, it is acknowledged on several occasions that both act without the assent of the Senate or the plebs. The Senate is eventually called upon to proceed with a sanctioning of the measures (esp. 45.20.2, 24.3, 38.2–39.1, 42.4). The argument is flawed since Antonius is being accused on the same grounds which do not provoke legal criticism of Octavian and Decimus Brutus. Equally, the second level of argument, Antonius' readiness to abuse his military power, is barely credible. Dio's Cicero struggles to admit that Antonius was indeed awarded Gaul by virtue of a senatorial decision. But he immediately qualifies this circumstance by asserting that the Senate had been forced to do so in the face of pressure exerted by Antonius (45.25.1–2).

The fact that he had entered legally problematic territory was clear to the real Cicero himself. This is indicated by an attentive reading in particular of the *Third Philippic*. Here, the speaker goes out of his way to depict Octavian's questionable recruitment of veterans as a laudable private initiative, as a measure to save the state from the evil machinations of Antonius. The same holds true of Decimus Brutus' actions and the defection of the 5th and 4th legions from Antonius and the transfer of their allegiance to Octavian. Cicero frequently speaks of a *privatum consilium* which would merely require subsequent ratification through the *auctoritas* of the Senate.[83] It is the danger facing the State because of Antonius which justifies extraordinary actions and even makes them commendable. The comparison shows that Dio has read and emulated Cicero's speech.[84] So, when Dio puts a questionable kind of argumentation

82 Calenus diagnoses the two weak points in his riposte to Cicero's speech. For one thing, Octavian has gathered an army without the necessary resolution of the Senate, while Antonius has been awarded Gaul precisely with the aid of this legal instrument. Decimus Brutus is seeking to prevent him from entering this province without authority. Cicero is therefore operating on the basis of dual standards. He levels accusations against Antonius while praising Octavian. He does not abide by any laws, nor does he keep an eye on the welfare of the State (esp. Cass. Dio 46.22.6–7 and 26.3–7). Moreover, Calenus explains that Cicero was not only personally present when the Senate passed its resolutions, but that he contributed to them with his arguments and vote. Furthermore, Antonius no longer had any soldiers whom he could have used to force the senators to vote against their conscience (esp. Cass. Dio 46.23.4, 24.1, 25.1, 26.1).

83 Cic. *Phil.* 2, esp. 1.3, 2.5, 3.7, 5.12, 6.14.

84 Concerning Dio's approach towards composing speeches based on models, see Gowing 1992, particularly 232, n. 17; 237–239; 244–245; see also Burden-Strevens 2017. For authenticity, see Faur 1978.

into the mouth of his Cicero, it is only because Cicero himself had also resorted to similar devices.[85]

Just as Cicero flirted with his willingness to die,[86] so does Dio's Cicero. At the beginning and at the end of his speech, Cicero especially creates his desired public persona. He presents himself as the sole authority in following high moral principles, one who is objectively concerned for the welfare of the state. Cicero declares that only if the senators were to decide to cast their vote in his favour would he then share in their joy of freedom and life. Otherwise, he would rather be dead than alive. Cicero faces the possibly fatal consequences of telling things the way they are (παρρησία).[87] Now, after all he has been through, Cicero believes he has nothing to fear in death. Therefore, it would be most inappropriate for him to act against the interests of the Senate out of fear of anyone. Otherwise, Cicero would regard himself as much of a slave as the Senate to Antonius. Such a cowardly attitude would result in the ruin of his soul and reputation. But to find death by speaking and acting for the good of the community is tantamount to achieving immortality. Dio's Cicero has lost patience with the senators' shortcomings in their attempts to ward off tyranny. Now he seizes the opportunity to present himself as a martyr for freedom and well-being, as a *vir bonus* (45.18.3). This manner of presenting himself pursues the implicit purpose of foreshadowing Cicero's premature end with a kind of tragic irony. His death is imminent, as has been presaged in an omen (45.17.3).

As an authorial narrator, Dio does not provide an explicit assessment of Cicero's speech. Instead, he has Calenus deliver an aggressive speech immediately afterwards (46.1–28).[88] Much of this invective seems unfair and insulting. Nor does it coincide with what Dio himself has reported up to that point.[89] However, it also serves to expose Cicero's weak points. Cicero, Calenus

85 Lange 2016b, 112 thus rightly states, "In his final years Cicero was clearly ready to go to extremes".

86 Cic. *Phil.* 1.6.14; 1.15.39; 2.46.118–119.

87 For παρρησία and the fall of the Republic, see Mallan 2016, 259–269 (dealing with the Younger Cato and Cicero).

88 The speech is said to have been held on the first of a three-day debate (Cass. Dio 46.25.1, 29.2).

89 Cf. Zielinski 1908, 18; for examples see Gowing 1992, 147. The sources in question (Millar 1964, 53–54) belong in part to Cicero's lifetime, in part to the period soon after his death; see further Keeline 2018, 182–188 and Urso 2019, 185–190. Burden-Strevens 2017, 137–139 rightly adds the arguments marshalled against Cicero by Antonius as paraphrased in the *Second Philippic* and finally concludes that Dio intended to show the character of political oratory in the Late Republic, not at all by pure fiction (generally in this respect I do not agree with Rodgers 2008 and Fomin 2016) but by faithfully drawing from the *Second Philippic* the essential argumentative outline. Many ancient historians did the same. It

explains, has always wanted to dictate who should be considered as friend or foe (46.3.4). He casts himself as the only patriot fighting with his παρρησία for freedom and democracy (46.16.3–4). Actually, Cicero has been guided by personal hatred and was ready to ignore the welfare of the community by plunging the city back into civil war (46.1.2–3 and esp. 28.1). This polemic is intended to reveal the carefully constructed image of himself. Dio certainly does not make Calenus' criticism appear entirely unjustified. Immediately after this speech, he makes known his own authorial criticism of Cicero's insulting remarks against Calenus which, he says, did not serve the interests of the common good (46.29.1). While Cicero might be good at inflicting harsh criticism, he is unable to take it:

> αὐτὸς μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἀκράτῳ καὶ κατακορεῖ τῇ παρρησίᾳ[90] ἀεὶ πρὸς πάντας ὁμοίως ἐχρῆτο, παρὰ δὲ δὴ τῶν ἄλλων οὐκ ἠξίου τὴν ὁμοίαν ἀντιλαμβάνειν.

Regarding the two speeches which Dio attributes to Cicero, it should be noted that while the amnesty speech presents Cicero as a serious statesman, his bitter fight against Antonius shows that he is no match for such a powerful opponent.[91] Even so, this does not mean that Dio rigorously intended to question Cicero's commitment to the *res publica*.

4 Cicero's Inglorious End and the Philiscus-Cicero Diatribe

The final act leads us to Cicero's inglorious end. Here, only the cruelty with which Antonius and Fulvia mistreat his head and right hand is reported (47.8.3–4). In the process, all of Antonius' hatred – in truth, the man displays a rather brutal character – is unleashed on the orator who had opposed him in a vehement speech. His murderer, richly rewarded by Antonius, is Popilius Laenas, even though Cicero had successfully represented him in court as his

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was a common practice in the rhetorical education of the Imperial period. In their narratives, however, historians were granted lesser freedom (see Porod 2013, 609–616 on Luc. *Hist. conscr*. 58). This is the reason why according to ancient historiographical theory their narratives and their speeches have to be dealt with differently. It is important to realize that Dio's speeches are not separated from the main narrative, as Fomin 2016, 232 assumes, but form together with it a coherent unit, from which no part is detachable. Regrettably, he nowhere makes any statement about the principles he observed in composing speeches; see Rich 2019, 220.

90 Concerning the wording, see Cass. Dio 38.12.6 (τῇ παρρησίᾳ πρὸς πάντας ὁμοίως ἀκράτῳ καὶ κατακορεῖ χρώμενος).

91 This is another "knowledge gap" (Peer 2020, 232).

legal counsel (47.10.6–7).[92] This is all Dio has to say about Cicero's death, quite unlike Appian's and Plutarch's detailed accounts.[93] Any hint of sympathy in regard to Cicero's undignified death is deliberately absent.[94] There is no obituary,[95] despite the fact that Dio otherwise follows historiographical conventions and usually adds one following the death of major historical figures.[96] The only thing he reports is that the son of Cicero's brother Quintus saved his father from the murderous reach of his pursuers. Even under torture, his lips are sealed. Feeling compassion, the father then gives himself up to the slaughterers (47.10.6–7),[97] thereby shining a bright light on a family in which such a noble act is possible.

Finally, the Philiscus-Cicero diatribe,[98] which is dealt with by scholars almost exclusively, should be interpreted on the basis of what has been discussed up to this point.[99] In general, this diatribe is taken to be entirely fictitious.[100] Dio's

92 Popilius Laenas' outrageous ingratitude is noted by both Appian (*BCiv.* 4.4.20) and Plutarch (Plut. *Cic.* 48.1). In Val. Max. 5.3.4, he is deemed an *exemplum* of unprecedented ingratitude. Keeline 2018, 111–113 and 140–146 points out the direct or indirect influence of early declamatory tradition. See already the critical discussion of all available sources by Wright 2001.

93 Both offer extensive accounts that differ in matters of detail (App. *BCiv.* 4.4.19–20; Plut. *Cic.* 47. 1–49.4).

94 Appian (*BCiv.* 4.4.19) notes that he has personally seen the location of the cruel event. Plutarch emphasizes the sympathy generated by Cicero's undignified death (Plut. *Comp. Dem. et Cic.* 5.1). The early declaimers were not interested in Cicero's life, but in his death (Kaster 1998 explores the reason for this curious fact).

95 Appian (*BCiv.* 4.4.20) credits Cicero as being an orator praised right up to that day and speaks sympathetically of the benefits Cicero had brought as consul to his homeland. Plutarch (Plut. *Cic.* 49.5) notes Augustus' posthumous praise of Cicero, saying that he was a true patriot.

96 Pompey's obituary gives Dio (Cass. Dio 42.5.1–6) cause to reflect on the paradoxes of life. Caesar, posthumously, is the subject of Antonius' brilliant but inappropriate speech (Cass. Dio 44.36–49); taken in context, it is a decidedly inflammatory oration. Cato, however, is granted a genuine obituary (Cass. Dio 43.11.6).

97 Differently Plut. *Cic.* 47.4 and App. *BCiv.* 4.4.20 (though here as an *exemplum* of a touching love between father and son).

98 For a balanced discussion see Rees 2011, 164–180.

99 Generally, it is viewed as "almost entirely detachable" (see Kemezis 2014, 290).

100 Philippson 1938; Millar 1961, 16; Millar 1964, 50; Berrigan 1966; Richter 1968, 195; Fechner 1986, 49–50; Gowing 1992, 145, n. 5; Claassen 1992, 30; Gowing 1998, 377; Jones 2016, 305; Keeline 2018, 172; Rich 2019, 220, and Kemezis in this volume. Dissenting views are those of Homeyer 1977, 82 (with n. 63) and 84, especially that of Bowersock 1965, 472 and of Rees 2011, 168–169 (with their legitimate search for a real background). If it is indeed a fiction (Φιλίσκος = friend), then it probably dates much earlier. If so, Dio had expanded on it only in regard to the details. Generally, for the methods applied by ancient historians in non-contemporary history see Marincola 1997, 95–117 and Bosworth 2003.

Philiscus is usually identified with that Philiscus who was part of the circle surrounding Julia Domna.[101] The diatribe is understood in such a way that Dio, in reality, is presenting his own ideal of life,[102] one filled with contemplation. Philiscus' exhortation to use banishment as a means of creating an enduring body of work along the lines of Xenophon and Thucydides (38.28.1) is rightly read as a reflection of the life that Dio himself led in Capua.[103] Fechner was the first to interpret Philiscus' comforting arguments on a political level.[104] A new interpretation will add a hitherto unnoticed aspect to these sound attempts at reconstructing Dio's conversation with Cicero "across the grave".[105] I take the diatribe as an integral way of balancing and, in a certain sense, correcting the global view of Cicero that had already been described in the unfavourable sources to which Dio had access for his narrative.[106]

The diatribe has all of the decisive moments in Cicero's life pass by the reader at once. First, there is Cicero's course of action in the context of the Catilinarian conspiracy. The killing of the plotters is used twice as a political weapon against him, initially by Clodius (38.14.4–6; cf. 38.16.5–17.3) and then by Calenus in order to play off the power of Antonius' supporters against Cicero (46.20.2). This represents a fateful moment in Cicero's life. The well-meaning Philiscus concedes that Cicero had acted in accordance with the Senate's decision (38.25.2).[107] The authorial Dio himself drew the same conclusion (37.35.4–36.3). He understood Cicero's time as consul to be the pinnacle of his lifetime achievements. Hence, he can have Philiscus say it was enough for Cicero to have once been accorded the honour of being appointed consul (38.28.3). That in itself presages that worse was to come. Towards the end of his life, Cicero tried to ingratiate himself into a second term as consul, though, to his detriment, at the high price of reaching out to Octavian (46.42.2). This was another fateful moment. For Cicero, as we have seen, will be thoroughly duped by the

101 Philippson 1938; Millar 1961, 16; Millar 1964, 50; van Stekelenburg 1971, 22; Letta 1979, 158; Fechner 1986, 49–50; Gowing 1998, 377.

102 Cf. Kemezis in this volume; Kemezis 2014, 111, n. 46 and 287; Scott 2017, 19–20.

103 Millar 1961, 17; Millar 1964, 51; Letta 1979, 160; Hose 1994, 448; Montecalvo 2010, 70; Kemezis 2014, 289. I do not agree with Keeline 2018, 172, n. 64. See Jones in this volume, who argues that this *consolatio* is a potential late insert into the non-contemporary books.

104 Fechner 1986, 48–58.

105 Gowing 1992, 145 rightly sees in it "Dio's curious way of communicating directly with the orator, as it were, across the grave."

106 For a different interpretation of this diatribe see Welch 2019, 105–106 (Cicero is a weak politician and a failed philosopher). For Dio's sources on Cicero, see n. 7 above.

107 In this respect, I agree with Coudry 2019, 47; for Coudry's different interpretation of Dio's Cicero, see n. 31 above.

young Caesar, when the latter allies himself with Antonius. In the end, Cicero falls victim to the proscriptions.

Philiscus' *vaticinium ex eventu* is directed at Antonius, Cicero's greatest enemy (38.29.1–3). Should Cicero move once again to acquire brilliant prestige in the state, he would come to a terrible and undignified end. Philiscus not only predicts the exact nature of Cicero's death, but also the abuse of his corpse. Though no one is named, it is clear that the details point to the cruelty of Antonius and Fulvia (47.8.1–4).[108] Cicero does not follow Philiscus' advice.[109] With his re-entry into politics, fate runs its course.

When one reads the advice given by Philiscus in this way, it becomes clear why Dio can ultimately dispense with a formal obituary. It had already been provided by Philiscus in the reading proposed here. Cicero's mentality, which was entirely focused on the need for judgment by the outside world (esp. 38.19.1, 23.1), makes him unable to adopt the liberated Stoic thinking[110] of Philiscus.[111] He can only be superficially comforted by it (38.30.1).[112] Cicero will re-enter the political stage at the earliest opportunity. Fifteen years before his death,

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108 Although Cicero has plenty of ammunition up his sleeve, he does not name Fulvia (Cic. *Phil.*, e.g., 2.5.11; 2.37.95; 2.44.113; 3.2.4; 3.6.16; 5.4.11).

109 In contrast to Augustus, who follows Livia's advice in another (formally comparable) diatribe (Cass. Dio 55.14–21, 22.1: see Manuwald 1979, 120–128). For the failure to pursue that path, generally for Dio's refusal to associate historians with safety, see Kemezis in this volume.

110 This is not an exhortation to follow an Epicurean way of life (as asserted by Gowing 1998, 379). All the motifs within the diatribe are taken from writings on banishment (Teles, Musonius, Plutarch, Favorinus, Seneca: Häsler 1935, Claassen 1996). Right from the outset, they convey the thinking of the Cynics and Stoics. Philiscus sensitively adapts the conventional motifs to the individual figure of Cicero. Consequently, there is no need at all to have recourse to the *genos*-typical cosmopolitan appeals.

111 Dio's orator Cicero has a low estimation of the Greeks compared to the Romans (Cass. Dio 44.26.2).

112 Yet at this point it must be noted that Dio possibly had some knowledge of Cicero's philosophical works written in the years 45–44. Two indicators point towards this. First Dio confronts Cicero with the Greek philosopher whom he knew from his times in Athens. Second, the diatribe expands on the same ideas that are also represented in Cicero's philosophical works, especially the *Tusculanae disputationes* (Cic. *Tusc.*, e.g., 3, 4–5; 3, 29; 3, 73–77; 5, 105–107). Although all these ideas are topical within Stoic philosophy, Montecalvo 2010 has suggested that they may be intended by Dio as echoes of Cicero's philosophical writings (differently, Gowing 1992, 159). According to Montecalvo 2014, 238 Dio knew "sicuramente i discorsi e probabilmente le *Tusculanae Disputationes*". If this is true, Dio's Cicero in some sense may be regarded to have followed Philiscus' advice, one more reason why Dio ultimately can dispense with an obituary. In this respect I do not agree with Keeline 2018, 171–177 who sees in this exclusively the influence of declamatory education.

he is already doomed in a higher sense. Cicero's failure will be the immediate consequence of his exorbitant craving for recognition, an urge that drives him on to an even greater extent than his – not entirely dishonest – commitment to the *res publica*.

Tellingly, however, Cicero's advocacy of outdated republican values is never criticized.[113] This shows the "objectivity" of Dio the historian: He is willing to understand Cicero as an individual who should be evaluated in the context of his time.[114] Dio uses the foil of the insightful Philiscus to counterbalance the derogatory judgments of his sources, to which in his narrative he feels committed as a historian of ancient history. In direct speeches, however, the ancient historians were granted greater freedom than in their narratives.[115] Dio claims this freedom in his innovative[116] integration of a diatribe into the stream of historical narrative. In particular, Cicero's lack of political instinct at a time dominated by power-hungry people[117] allows Dio to express a certain sympathy for the failed politician who should have known that his time was up much earlier. Had this occurred, the illustriousness of the office of consul would have remained untarnished.[118]

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113 Peer 2020, 228, however, reads this into Cicero's speech after Caesar's death as presented by Dio, although Dio with his authorial voice never criticizes Cicero in his narrative for his republican values.

114 Gowing 1998, 383 and 388 views this quite differently: Dio's Cicero, he asserts, hindered the transition to the monarchy. But see the completely different view offered *en passant* by Altman 2015, 224, n. 35. See also n. 5 above.

115 Porod 2013, 609–616. See also n. 89 above.

116 Jones 2016, 302. Jones in this volume observes that such a dialogic *consolatio ad exulem* is not quite like anything produced by other historiographers, but that a similar mode of rhetoric was deployed by the novelists (particularly by Heliodorus) as well.

117 For the self-interest of the dynasts as vital in civil war, see Lange 2019; for the search for military glory as contributing to the ruin of the republic, see Bertrand 2019. Markov 2020 extends the research focus by including soldiers, plebs, and Senate as well as political forces in their own right. Coudry 2019, 46 views the breakdown of the republic not as a matter of power, but of wrecked institutions; on the destructiveness of institutional competition, see also Lindholmer 2019.

118 For another "failure" in the late republic, see Potter in this volume. Potter observes that Dio's Pompey seems a tragic figure ("more tragic than evil"), because he destroys himself through his alliance with the more ruthless Caesar.

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CHAPTER 15

Cameo Roles: Dio's Portrayal of Earlier Senatorial Historians

Adam M. Kemezis

In the first surviving fragment of Cassius Dio's text, he claims to be acquainted with "everything, one might say, written about [the Romans] by anyone" (1.1.2 [EM] πάντα ὡς εἰπεῖν τὰ περὶ αὐτῶν τισι γεγραμμένα).[1] Formidable an assertion as this is, it is curiously one-sided. Dio, after all, is more than a reader of this material; he is also a contributor to it, but he is frustratingly silent (in this surviving passage at least) about how he sees the relationship between his own work and the existing tradition he claims to know so well. He does not seem here to be setting up earlier historians either as distinguished authorities on whom he will rely or as inadequate predecessors whom he will surpass. This combination of grandiose claims and apparent reticence about specifics is frustrating but not unrepresentative of Dio's subsequent practice. Dio's history tells us a good deal about himself and his literary endeavors. We can also deduce Dio's engagement, through source-consultation and literary modeling, with a wide range of historians, from Herodotus and Thucydides up through the Latin tradition. Dio talks about himself a lot and he reads a lot. What he does not do is talk about his own reading. Source-citations or any explicit references to other authors are all but unknown in Dio. This article explores a partial exception to this rule.[2] There are a number of occasions when Dio mentions authors of history, biography, and autobiography, but as historical characters rather than as

1 Boissevain 1895–1901 prints no main verb in the text and leaves conjectures for the apparatus. The ἀνέγνων printed in the Loeb edition of Cary 1914 is Bekker's suggestion. I am most grateful to my fellow editors for their constructive comments, to all participants in the original session in Banff and contributors to this volume, and to Mario Lentano for making available work that was inaccessible to me in the current circumstances. In what follows, all translations are my own, with Latin or Greek text from standard critical editions. Testimonia and fragments of all fragmentary historians (except Sallust's *Histories*) are cited by number from *FrHist.* (i.e., Cornell 2013).

2 There are two further kinds of exception. First, Plutarch is mentioned twice in Republican fragments preserved by the *Excerpta Valesiana* (Cass. Dio 40.5 and 107). Both occasions seem intrusive, and Boissevain (*ad* 40.5) suspects they are additions by the excerptor. Second, Dio mentions autobiographical works by emperors, for which see Table 15.1 below.

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literary personages.[3] Figures from Cornelius Sisenna to Marius Maximus make brief and usually inconsequential appearances in Dio's work. The practice is too restricted to be called a consistent habit, but it is frequent enough that it appears conscious. Furthermore, there are a few extended episodes, which will be my main focus, where Dio dwells at more length on the figure of the senator as historian. In particular, I will look at his treatments of Sallust, Rutilius Rufus, Cicero, and Cremutius Cordus, as well as some analogous shorter vignettes. These four episodes, I will argue, show a remarkable thematic continuity. All of them explicitly or implicitly place history-writing within a series of significant oppositions in the discourse of Roman political identity. These include success and failure, honor and disgrace, safety and danger, and retirement and activity. In all four of these episodes, I will argue, Dio deliberately tells the story so as to reject or occlude the positive end of these oppositions and stress the negative possibilities for the historian. Furthermore, many features from these episodes will recur later when Dio describes the origins and progression of his own literary and public career.

The role of senator-historian was, by Dio's time, a venerable one. For more than four hundred years, senators had availed themselves of historiography and related genres. Naturally, they had a well-developed discourse about what they were doing and why.[4] At their most self-satisfied, senators had highly idealized models of how history might complement their political activities. Perhaps the most optimistic vision of this relationship is formulated by Cicero, when in the preamble to the *De legibus* (1.3.10) he has his own character respond as follows to Atticus' and Quintus' suggestion that he should find himself some leisure in order to write a history:

> *Ego uero aetatis potius uacationi confidebam, cum praesertim non recusarem, quominus more patrio sedens in solio consulentibus responderem senectutisque non inertis grato atque honesto fungerer munere. Sic enim mihi liceret et isti rei quam desideras et multis uberioribus atque maioribus operae quantum uellem dare.*

3 On these various references, see Table 15.1, also Kuhn-Chen 2002, 135–136. In what follows, I will occasionally for convenience use "historian" and "historical" to refer to authors and works in the genres of biography and autobiography, remaining attentive to the generic distinctions thus elided.

4 A full survey of "senatorial" history-writing is lacking in current scholarship, but see Marincola 1997, 91–93, 136–144 for considerations on rhetorical authority. The theme has naturally been addressed most fully in scholarship on Tacitus (e.g., Syme 1970) and also on the Republican period, for which see La Penna 1978. For the senatorial aspects of Dio's persona, see recently Burden-Strevens 2015 and Scott 2017b.

> I was really looking more to the freedom of old age, particularly as I wouldn't turn down the chance to sit in the chair in the way of our ancestors and give responses to questioners and perform the welcome and honorable duties of an active old age. That way I'd be able to give as much attention as I wanted to the thing you're asking for [i.e., a history], and to many greater and more fruitful things.

Like many a fantasy of retirement, Cicero's scenario assumes a benignly predictable world in which the honored elder statesman can count on continuity of both ancestral cultural practices (*more patrio*) and of his own prestige and influence. It is, however, significant that this sunny picture refers to a history that was never written and is spoken by a character clearly eager to move the conversation on from history to law and philosophy. Still, the scenario forms part of the rhetorical backdrop to the vision of a traditionalist utopia that Cicero will enunciate. Elsewhere, he will imagine a similar picture of the historian-*cum*-elder-statesman, but associated with the Elder Cato, the founder of Latin historiography (*Sen.* 38 [= Cato T6]), whose own writings invoked similar tropes. Naturally, many careers (not least Cicero's own) failed to run such a smooth course, and, as we will see shortly with Sallust, there were models of the senator-historian that accounted for disaffection and disappointment. Both the Cicero-Cato and the Sallust model are acknowledged and rejected in Dio's history. The Severan consular identified profoundly with the tradition at whose end he found himself, but this only gave him a sharper sense of its failure to encompass political reality as he experienced it.[5]

1 Sallust

Our first example of Dio's portrayal of a senator-historian was, when Dio wrote, the most widely read such author in Latin literature. Sallust's take on the historian-as-retired-politician motif is given at some length in the preface to the *Bellum Catilinae*. He begins by explaining that he was attracted to politics in his youth but was repelled by the immorality and greed of the republic in his time, and the unjustified calumnies that his ambition brought him. Then, he explains (4.1–2):

5 For Dio as engaging with both Cato's and Sallust's views of history and retirement, see now Scott 2017b, 9.

> *Igitur ubi animus ex multis miseriis atque periculis requievit et mihi reliquam aetatem a re publica procul habendam decrevi, non fuit consilium socordia atque desidia bonum otium conterere neque vero agrum colundo aut venando servilibus officiis, intentum aetatem agere; sed, a quo incepto studioque me ambitio mala detinuerat, eodem regressus statui res gestas populi Romani carptim, ut quaeque memoria digna videbantur, perscribere, eo magis, quod mihi a spe, metu, partibus rei publicae animus liber erat.*
>
> Thus when my mind took rest from many woes and dangers and I made the decision to spend the rest of my life away from politics, my idea was not to waste my best years of leisure in sloth and idleness, nor to devote my time to farming or hunting, which are slavish activities. I decided rather to return to the undertaking and endeavor from which wicked ambition had held me back, to write, separately and fully, on those actions of the Roman people that seemed to me worthy of memory, particularly since my mind was free from hope, fear or political partisanship.

Certainly, Sallust's picture here is less cheerful than Cicero's. Instead of complementing the successful statesman's role in maintaining a well-ordered *res publica*, historiography becomes an alternative when honorable public service is impossible due to the dysfunction of the state. It is positioned in a safe realm of tranquillity (*animus ex multis miseriis atque periculis requievit*) in which one's moral as well as physical vulnerabilities find shelter. This safe and detached vantage point allows Sallust to turn his political experience into a literary authority that is based not on the actual achievement and political *auctoritas* of a Catonian or Ciceronean elder statesman but on the hard-won insight of a disillusioned former minor player whose marginality frees him from partiality.[6] Dio and his readers were surely well aware of this passage, and the self-portrait of a failed statesman moralizing from retirement and bitter hindsight clearly registered with the later historian, though not, we will see, in a way that made him want to replicate it.[7]

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6 Cf. Sall. *Hist.* F1.6 Ramsey = 1.7 McGushin, where the historian denies that his earlier civil-war partisanship will affect his writing.

7 Dio appears to have used Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* in his account of the conspiracy, though he does not follow him closely. See Freyburger-Galland 1997 and Lachenaud & Coudry 2014, xix–xx, xxiv–xxv. His account of the Third Mithridatic War also demonstrates use of the *Histories*, for which see Ballesteros Pastor 2018. Even those of Dio's audience who had little engagement with Latin literature might have encountered Sallust in the Greek translation made in Hadrian's time by Zenobius (Suda s.v. Ζηνόβιος).

Sallust's role as a character in Dio is small but recurrent and distinctive. He receives three separate mentions, which is clearly out of proportion to his role in the politics of his time. In none of these episodes does he distinguish himself for the better. We first meet him in the narrative of 50 BCE, when Ap. Claudius Pulcher as censor makes himself obnoxious by expelling from the Senate a number of freedmen's sons, "but also many genuine men of birth, including Crispus Sallustius, the one who wrote history" (40.63.4: συχνοὺς δὲ καὶ τῶν πάνυ γενναίων, ἄλλους τε καὶ τὸν Κρίσπον τὸν Σαλούστιον τὸν τὴν ἱστορίαν γράψαντα). Dio gives no rationale for the expulsion, although there was a considerable tradition in antiquity that the cause was an adultery scandal.[8] The next time we see Sallust is two books and three years later, when he is a lieutenant of Caesar's in charge of troops on their way to Africa for the Thapsus expedition. Dio explicitly marks the incident as a sequel by including an explanatory parenthesis for those who remember Sallust's earlier expulsion: He had regained his senatorial status by being chosen as praetor (42.52.2). However, the senatorial revenant's luck turns again because the troops are discontented and nearly murder him. He narrowly escapes and runs to Caesar in Rome, followed by mutinous soldiers who manage to kill two other senators. Caesar then makes his way south and quells the mutiny.

These two earlier Sallust episodes prepare us for his last and fullest appearance, immediately after the account of Caesar's victory over the Pompeian-Numidian forces at Thapsus. It runs as follows (43.9.2–3):

> καὶ τοὺς Νομάδας λαβὼν ἔς τε τὸ ὑπήκοον ἐπήγαγε καὶ τῷ Σαλουστίῳ λόγῳ μὲν ἄρχειν ἔργῳ δὲ ἄγειν τε καὶ φέρειν ἐπέτρεψεν. ἀμέλει καὶ ἐδωροδόκησε πολλὰ καὶ ἥρπασεν, ὥστε καὶ κατηγορηθῆναι 〈καὶ〉 αἰσχύνην ἐσχάτην ὀφλεῖν, ὅτι τοιαῦτα συγγράμματα συγγράψας καὶ πολλὰ καὶ πικρὰ περὶ τῶν ἐκκαρπουμένων τινὰς εἰπὼν οὐκ ἐμιμήσατο τῷ ἔργῳ τοὺς λόγους. ὅθεν εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα ἀφείθη ὑπὸ τοῦ Καίσαρος, ἀλλ' αὐτός γε ἑαυτὸν καὶ πάνυ τῇ συγγραφῇ ἐστηλοκόπησε.
>
> [Caesar] took over the Numidians, made them subjects and appointed Sallust, ostensibly as their governor but in fact to pillage them. He [Sallust] duly engaged in much bribe-taking and plundering, so that he

8 In particular, it was commonly asserted that Milo had caught Sallust with his wife Fausta, daughter of the dictator Sulla. The adultery story goes back at least to Varro (cited in Gell. *NA* 17.18) and is associated with Sallust's removal according to Ps.-Acro *ad* Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.49 (allegedly drawing on Asconius) and [Cic.] *In Sall.* 16. See Syme 1964, 278–279 for further details.

> was prosecuted and incurred the deepest disgrace since, having written the kind of histories he had, saying many harsh things about certain corrupt men, he did not in his deeds live up to his words. Thus, even though he was completely pardoned by Caesar, he still inscribed in his history as on a monument a most effective indictment of himself.

Dio is not our only source for the incident: It is also mentioned in the spurious Ciceronean invective against Sallust.[9] What is distinctive in Dio, though, is his implicit rearrangement of chronology. As seen above, Sallust's writings were in reality the fruit of his retirement in the years after his trial. Dio does not explicitly assert it was the other way around, but he makes it sound very much as if the "deepest disgrace" manifested itself at the time of his trial. Likewise, the idea of "not in his deeds living up to his words" naturally implies that the words are already there for Sallust to imitate consciously. Readers unfamiliar with Sallust's biography are likely to assume that the writings came before the trial, but their better-informed counterparts, being familiar with the *Catiline* preface as well as other traditions, will quickly register the disconnect.[10]

The implicit reordering is neither accidental nor inconsequential. Given the signposting Dio has done with earlier episodes in Sallust's life, he clearly wants to give that life a particular sequence and characterization. Putting the writings first does not palliate the corruption, but it does turn historiography into a very different act. If Dio had located Sallust's composition firmly after the trial, it would become an act of either particularly brazen hypocrisy or notably successful self-reinvention. Dio is far from the only later reader to cast Sallust as a hypocrite, but such readers' main concern is typically with the authority of his literary works, which is preemptively tarnished by his career.[11] What Dio does is, in fact, the opposite: He makes it sound very much as if the works, by coming first, harmed the career, or at least made its end more bitter.

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9 The provincial extortion is mentioned by [Cic.] *In Sall.* 19, with the further detail that Sallust gave Caesar a massive bribe to avoid not only conviction but even trial (*ne causam diceret*). The invective is generally taken to predate Dio, although no certain attestation of it exists before the late-antique grammarian Diomedes, for which see Ernout 1962, 22; Novokhatko 2009, 112.

10 Indeed Syme 1964, 291 notes the anachronism, but assumes it is accidental: "[Dio] makes a careless assumption which reflects his own epoch rather – authors becoming magistrates and governors." As will be clear, I consider that Dio is much more fully engaged with Roman traditions regarding historiography and retirement than Syme does.

11 See, in addition to Gell. *NA* 17.18, Lact. *Inst. Div.* 2.12.12; Symm. *Ep.* 5.68.2; Macr. *Sat.* 3.13.9.

In this sense, Sallust becomes almost a victim of circumstance, or at least of ordinary human weakness. How was he to know when he wrote his words that he would later prove shamefully deficient when judged by the moral standards he evoked? Dio's wording enhances the impression of passivity by stressing Caesar's role. It is he who wants the Numidians shaken down, and Sallust comes across as a subordinate, if willing, agent. Dio is not exactly defending Sallust, but if we read this as a story about provincial corruption, its primary villain is Caesar. Sallust's role has more to do with what it means to be an author and the unintended consequences that can come from political speech in literature. Even Caesar's pardon, which ought to be iron-clad insurance, cannot cancel out the effect of one's own words.[12] If the story has a moral, it is less "practice what you preach" than "avoid preaching at all."

These potential pitfalls are part of the larger uncertainty that goes with a political career. Sallust's first entry into the Senate had led to disgrace; Caesar's restoration of him to honor had led to his ignominious near-lynching. Some notable episodes are omitted in Dio's version, though he likely knew of them: We hear nothing about Sallust's role in securing Milo's exile or his more competent performance later in the Thapsus campaign.[13] Nor, as noted above, do we hear the more salacious elements of the anti-Sallustian tradition. Dio is not aiming for a complete portrait or a character assassination. Rather, Dio gives us a Sallust who is not immune to worldly temptation but who finds himself ineffectual and overmatched when playing a game controlled by much bigger players. This is in fact not so different from the self-portrait of Sallust quoted above, with one major difference: For the real Sallust, writing is the solution; for Dio's Sallust, it is part of the problem. When he pursues literary glory and political power at the same time, the two endeavors coincide in such a way that the first helps to thwart the second.

12 This is a clever reversal of the trope, which we will shortly see employed by Tacitus, that tyrants' efforts to silence their critics are futile in the face of literary posterity.

13 For the attack on Milo, see Syme 1964, 31–34. The role of Sallust is repeatedly mentioned in Asconius, and Lachenaud & Coudry 2011, xix argue forcefully (*contra* Syme's assumption) that Dio consulted Asconius for precisely these events. Asconius (*In Mil.* 37C) names Sallust as one of three tribunes active against Milo, along with Munatius Plancus and Pompeius Rufus. Dio twice (40.49.1 and 40.55) mentions the other two together without Sallust. Sallust's later role in supplying grain to Caesar was perhaps unspectacular but is singled out in the *Bellum Africum* (34) as a cause for celebration, and Dio does comment on Caesar's supply difficulties at that stage of the war (43.2.4) without mentioning their resolution. Dio also does not mention a military failure of Sallust's in 49 (Oros. 6.15.8, cf. Dio 41.40).

2 Rutilius Rufus

Remarkably enough, the Sallust episode is not the first time that Dio has chosen to develop an anecdote of a provincial-corruption trial featuring a senatorial historian, but the earlier episode is in many ways a reverse case of what happens to Sallust. The *Excerpta Valesiana* give us two quite full fragments (combined into Cass. Dio 97, a page and a half in the Loeb edition) of Dio's account of the trial of Rutilius Rufus. This was a *cause célèbre* of the 90s BCE, known to us most fully from Cicero's account in the *Brutus* (113–116 = Rutilius T1; cf. *De or.* 1.229–230) but much commented-on in our other fragmentary traditions for this ill-attested decade.[14] Dio's surviving account gives us a relatively full narrative. He explains that Rutilius, an upright man, was put on trial for extortion while serving as legate to Mucius Scaevola in Asia. The prosecution was contrived (ἐκ κατασκευασμοῦ) by equestrian allies of tax-contractors whose abuses he had restrained while in office, and the charge is thus bitterly ironic. As Dio describes the trial:

> ὁ Ῥουτίλιος ἀπελογήσατο μὲν γενναιότατα, καὶ οὐδὲν ὅ τι οὐκ εἶπεν ὧν ⟨ἂν⟩ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς συκοφαντούμενος καὶ πολὺ πλεῖον τὰ τῶν κοινῶν ἢ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ ὀδυρόμενος φθέγξαιτο, ἑάλω δέ, καὶ τῆς γε οὐσίας εὐθὺς ἐξέστη. ἐξ οὗπερ οὐχ ἥκιστα ἐφωράθη μηδέν οἱ προσήκουσαν καταδίκην ὀφλήσας· πολλῷ τε γὰρ σμικρότερα κεκτημένος εὑρέθη ἢ οἱ κατήγοροι ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας αὐτὸν ἐσφετερίσθαι ἐπεκάλουν, καὶ πάντα ἐκεῖνα ἐς δικαίας καὶ νομίμους ἀρχὰς τῆς κτήσεως ἀνήγαγεν. οὕτω μὲν ἐπηρεάσθη, καί τινα ὁ Μάριος αἰτίαν τῆς ἁλώσεως αὐτοῦ ἔσχεν· ἀρίστῳ γὰρ καὶ εὐδοκιμωτάτῳ αὐτῷ ὄντι ἐβαρύνετο. διόπερ καὶ ἐκεῖνος τῶν τε πραττομένων ἐν τῇ πόλει καταγνούς, καὶ ἀπαξιώσας τοιούτῳ ἔτι ἀνθρώπῳ συζῆσαι, ἐξεχώρησε μηδενὸς ἀναγκάζοντος
>
> Rutilius made a most noble defense and left out nothing that a good man would say confronting a false accusation, lamenting the distress of the commonwealth much more than his own. But he was convicted and immediately deprived of his property. This actually made it clear that he in no way deserved the accusation against him. It came out that his property was much less than what his accusers claimed he had extorted from Asia. And he demonstrated possession of all of it through honest and lawful means. Thus, he was unjustly persecuted, and Marius got some of

14 This episode of Dio is treated fully by Urso 2013, 186–198. For the politics surrounding the trial, see the revisionist argument of Kallet-Marx 1990, with references to more traditional views. A list of testimonia to his trial can be found in Broughton 1952, 2.8–9.

> the blame for his conviction.[15] He was irked by Rutilius' excellence and sterling reputation. Therefore Rutilius, disgusted with the affairs of the city and disdaining to live in such a person's company, emigrated without anyone's compelling him.

Rutilius then settles in Asia, the very province he allegedly plundered, where the locals are eager to relieve his poverty, so that he ends up richer than he was before. Here for once Dio's taste for ironic twists leads to a happy ending. Indeed Dio has gone out of his way to produce the most upbeat version of the story possible.[16] Not only is all Rutilius' wealth restored, but his "exile" is portrayed as a deliberate choice and a moral victory.[17] Cicero, by contrast, had made it a tragic narrative in which Rutilius refused on principle to deliver a rhetorically moving defense and thus gave Cicero an example of the poverty of Stoic oratory.[18] In Dio, the story's thematic arc is the reverse of what readers will see in the Sallust anecdote: Rutilius is falsely condemned due to powerful enemies, but vindicated by unexpected events and actions, his own and others'; Sallust will be unjustly reprieved thanks to a powerful friend, but still condemned by his own words.

What is significantly absent in Dio's surviving narrative, however, is any mention of Rutilius' own writings. Other traditions make it appear that in his exile he wrote a Latin work on his own career and a Greek-language history,

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15 For the translation here regarding Marius' responsibility, see Urso 2013, 193–195.

16 Perhaps the closest parallel tradition to Dio is Val. Max. 2.10.5, who also alludes to the support Rutilius received from cities in Asia and asks, "would one more properly call this exile, I ask, or a triumph?" (*exulare aliquis, rogo, hoc an triumphare iustius dixerit?*)

17 It is true that all exile in the pre-Sullan Republic was formally "voluntary," since it was not a sentence but rather a permissible pre-emptive move to avoid a more severe sentence, usually death (see Kelly 2006, 17–19) and thus (as argued by Urso 2013, 195–197) Dio's account is not absolutely inconsistent with other accounts in which Rutilius is unambiguously compelled by law or force to leave Rome (e.g. Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.80; Livy *Per.* 70; Val. Max. 6.4.4; Tac. *Ann.* 4.43.5 and repeated references in the Senecan corpus). However, Dio's attribution of ethical motives to Rutilius clearly implies a genuine choice not found in other authors. Curiously, as noted by Urso 2013, 193, Dio has already had Coriolanus express a similar idea about exile as withdrawal from one's unworthy and ungrateful compatriots (18.11 [EM]), and it will recur also in the Philiscus-Cicero dialogue (38.26.1). Many sources do dwell on Rutilius' choice to avoid an undignified defense and later to reject Sulla's offer of recall (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 24.4 *exilium Metellus fortiter tulit, Rutilius etiam libenter*) and it is possible Dio has chosen to take this aspect of Rutilius' story one step further.

18 Cic. *De or.* 1.229–230. Dio's characterization of Rutilius' defense as "he left out nothing that a good man would say" (οὐδὲν ὅ τι οὐκ εἶπεν ὢν ⟨ἂν⟩ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς) may be a way of disputing Cicero's characterization.

both of which described his trial in doubtless exculpatory terms.[19] There is every reason to believe that Dio knew of and had access to at least one of these works, given that Rutilius is named as an author (and in most cases likely consulted) by Appian, Gellius, Granius Licinianus and Athenaeus.[20] Still, unless the Constantinian excerptors have been unusually perverse, it appears that Dio left all mention of this work out of his own narrative.[21] Given Rutilius' continued and apparently bilingual popularity, the omission would have been noticed by several segments of Dio's alert literary public. The idea of a wronged man finding redress in his writings is an obvious one, but while Dio certainly emphasizes the element of vindication in Rutilius' story, he locates that vindication in the man's life and experience seemingly to the exclusion of his words. The road of history-as-self-justification is not taken, in the same ostentatious way that history-as-self-accusation will be inserted into the later story of Sallust.

3 Cicero

With Rutilius, Dio seems to have significantly omitted mention of a real work of history by a minor author. The next case will feature him speculating about a major author and a work of history that never existed, at least in the form Dio imagines. The notion of Cicero as the great historian that never was is a somewhat predictable one, given his own repeated hints in his letters and dialogues that he should try his hand at a genre where (at least in his opinion) Latin letters so needed his aid.[22] And since Cicero is the one Roman author with whom

19 See *FrHist.* #21 for fragments and testimonia, along with Hendrickson 1933 and Candau 2011, 139–147.

20 See testimonia in *FrHist.*. For Dio's likely use of Rutilius, see Urso 2019, 68–69. It is not important for our purposes whether the work in question is the Latin or the Greek account.

21 If Dio did mention the writings, one would have to assume it was in a passage at the end that was then discarded by the excerptors. However, the end of our fragment (ὥστε πολὺ πλείω αὐτὸν τῆς ἀρχαίας οὐσίας ἔχειν) provides a neat and self-contained moral to the story, such that any further extended treatment of the "he justified himself in his writings" theme would seem redundant. For what it is worth, the excerptors did retain the full text of Dio 43.9.2–3, detailing Sallust's trial and mentioning his writings (*EV* Dio §127).

22 See, in addition to the testimonia in *FrHist.* (#39), Cic. *De Or.* 2.51–52 and *Ad Att.* 16.13a.2, also Nep. Frag. 58 Marshall and Plut. *Cic.* 41.1. What we know of Cicero's autobiographical writings is summed up by Tatum 2011, 176–181 and treated in full by Kurczyk 2006 and Diegel 2021. The larger question of Cicero's engagement with historiography was famously taken up by Brunt 1980 and Woodman 1988, 70–116, both reprinted in Marincola 2011; see also Feldherr 2003; Fox 2007; Laird 2009.

Dio most fully engages, we should not be surprised that it is a path he does choose to follow.

He does so most explicitly in a unique context, however: the speech of consolation to which a philosopher named Philiscus subjects the orator during his period of exile and depression in 58–57 BCE (38.18–30).[23] Philiscus appears to be an invented character whose philosophically eclectic recommendations are, whatever one makes of their content, an ironic commentary on Cicero's own attitudes and behavior during a notoriously inglorious part of his career.[24] Also, as Porod argues in this volume, Philiscus' words can be read both backward and forward in the narrative to constitute an overall summary of the great man's career. However, that summary includes many counterfactuals, suggestions Cicero does not take. One of these involves historiography. After predicting that Cicero will be recalled to Rome (38.27.4), Philiscus adds that should this turn out not to be the case, another option exists (38.28.1–2):

> ἂν μὲν γάρ μοι πεισθῇς, καὶ πάνυ ἀγαπήσεις χωρίον τέ τι παραθαλασσίδιον ἔξω πάτου ἐκλεξάμενος, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ γεωργῶν τε ἅμα καὶ συγγράφων τι, ὡς Ξενοφῶν, ὡς Θουκυδίδης. τό τε γὰρ εἶδος τοῦτο τῆς σοφίας διαρκέστατόν ἐστι καὶ παντὶ μὲν ἀνδρὶ πάσῃ δὲ πολιτείᾳ ἁρμοδιώτατον, καὶ ἡ φυγὴ φέρει τινὰ σχολὴν γονιμωτέραν.
>
> My advice to you would be to content yourself with picking out an estate for yourself, out of the way and by the sea, where you can farm and also write a bit of history, like Xenophon, like Thucydides. That is the most lasting form of learning, and most appropriate for all men in all governments. And exile brings a certain productive leisure.

This is again a bit different from the honored retirement Cicero imagined for himself in the *De legibus*, and it is not impossible that Dio here is responding to that passage. It is a little more like how Sallust presents himself in the

23 See Porod in this volume, as well as Millar 1961; Claassen 1996; Gowing 1998; Montecalvo 2010; Montecalvo 2014, 231–282; Lachenaud & Coudry 2011, lvii–lxvi.

24 Recent scholarship is all but unanimous that Philiscus is an invention, though Schwartz 1959, 445–446 (= *RE* 3.2.1719) does assume that, as with the Agrippa-Maecenas and Augustus-Livia dialogues, Dio found some mention of a similar incident in the tradition and built on it with his own words. The suggestion of Millar 1964, 50, that Dio's Philiscus is named after the contemporary sophist of the same name found in Philostratus (*VS* 621–623) is not impossible, but the naming should not be seen as determining either the content of the episode or (as Millar suggests) its entire composition.

Bellum Catilinae, or indeed the real-life situation of Rutilius Rufus.[25] It is also, as many scholars have noticed, reminiscent of how Dio will later speak of his own villa at Capua.[26] The invocation of Thucydides and Xenophon, however, marks the advice as Greek, and indeed the idea of a historian as an exile was more characteristic of the Greek than the Roman tradition, Rutilius Rufus notwithstanding.[27] In any case, we are meant to see Philiscus' scenario as a basically attractive one with excellent historical precedents on its side.[28] Dio's senatorial authors have many rhetorically appealing paths before them, including those that lead across cultural lines.

As with the previous two examples, though, what matters most is the failure to pursue that path: Philiscus' advice will never be taken. In part, this is because Cicero is recalled before settling into his enforced retirement. However, Dio makes a point of describing a scenario in which Cicero does write history, but very differently from how Philiscus had imagined.[29] In his narrative of Cicero's return, Dio notes that the orator maintained a grudge against Caesar and Crassus for the role he believed they had in his exile. Since that exile had taught him the dangers of expressing that bitterness in speech, writing seems like the next best thing (39.10.2–3):

> βιβλίον μέντοι τι ἀπόρρητον συνέθηκε, καὶ ἐπέγραψεν αὐτῷ ὡς καὶ περὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ βουλευμάτων ἀπολογισμόν τινα ἔχοντι, πολλὰ δὲ δὴ καὶ δεινὰ ἐς αὐτὸ καὶ περὶ ἐκείνων καὶ περὶ ἄλλων τινῶν συνένησε, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο φοβηθεὶς μὴ καὶ ζῶντος αὐτοῦ ἐκφοιτήσῃ, κατεσημήνατό τε αὐτὸ καὶ παρέδωκε τῷ παιδί,

25 Philiscus' seemingly irrelevant reference to agriculture may be a response to Sallust's snobbish rejection of that activity. In addition, Philiscus makes claims about the voluntary nature of Cicero's exile (38.26.1) that are pointedly inconsistent with what Dio's own narrator has said on the subject a few pages before (38.17.4) but oddly reminiscent of how he described Rutilius.

26 Noted by Millar 1961, 17, also Gowing 1998, who makes interesting connections with references to a Ciceronian villa in Philostratus' *Apollonius*.

27 See on this point Dillery 2007, who shows that, while Thucydides and Xenophon both indisputably did suffer exile, many other instances of the trope are more dubious. Dillery also makes the salient point (55) that Greek (i.e., pre-imperial) historians' exiles are never seen as being caused by their historical writings. For the cultural complexities of Dio's authorial persona, see Asirvatham in this volume.

28 This case is made most fully by Gowing 1998, 381–383, although he considers that Dio endorses the scenario more unproblematically than I am arguing here.

29 For a different view, see Montecalvo 2014, 216–217, who considers that when at 39.10.2–3 Cicero avoids direct confrontation with his enemies but instead writes a secret history, he is putting Philiscus' precepts into action.

προστάξας οἱ μήτ' ἀναγνῶναι μήτε δημοσιεῦσαι τὰ γεγραμμένα πρὶν ἂν μεταλλάξῃ.

> [Cicero] did, however, put together a secret book and claimed in its title that it contained a self-justification regarding his own intentions. But he threw into it a great deal of harsh material about [Caesar and Crassus] as well as some others. Thus, he was frightened that it might become common knowledge while he was alive, so he sealed it and gave it to a slave,[30] enjoining him neither to read it nor to make it public until after his death.

This seems to refer to the composition known to us as Cicero's *De consiliis suis*, a work that did indeed become public, though whether posthumously or not is unclear.[31] It does seem clear, however, that the book, along with much else in Cicero's conduct for the rest of his life, does not follow Philiscus' prescriptions. It is seemingly composed in the heat of Cicero's post-recall political activity rather than in a seaside retirement and the term ἀπολογισμός has little of the detached authority of Thucydidean historiography.

The Dionian *De consiliis* is not what Philiscus had in mind, but it also seems to be a failure on its own terms. Dio's rather convoluted language about the title suggests that Cicero lost sight of his own objective, as if he had tried to write a measured vindication of his own actions but his spleen got the better of him and what came out was an invective against his powerful enemies, which he then found himself unable to make public. The idea of fearing one's own writings and suppressing their circulation will recur in Dio's narrative.

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30 Lachenaud & Coudry 2011, 129 sensibly conclude that the τῷ παιδί to whom Cicero gives the work is his secretary Tiro rather than (as other translators had assumed) his son, who was a child at the time.

31 For what is known about this work, see Drummond's introduction in *FrHist.* (1.376–379) and then the testimonia and fragments in *FrHist.* #39, along with Diegel 2021, 156–162. Some letters to Atticus from 59 (esp. 2.6.2 = T7) mention a planned work that sounds like this one, whereas Plutarch (*Crass.* 13.4–5 = Cicero T12) mentions a work that must be the same one Dio is talking about, but says it was published only after Caesar and Crassus were dead. Tatum 2011, 180 suggests the work was published around the same time as the *Philippics*, in spite of Cicero's earlier intention to wait until his own death, while Diegel 2021, 158–160 supposes it came out after all three men were dead, perhaps in an unfinished form. It is possible, however, that Dio preferred Cicero's death as the publication date by analogy with his plans for his own history. The title *De consiliis suis* is not necessarily original. Asconius (*In tog. cand.* 83C = Cicero F4) speaks of it as *expositio consiliorum suorum*, perhaps referring to Cicero's own title, and Dio's ἀπολογισμός may be a translation of *expositio*.

In Dio's contemporary world, and in his version of the post-Augustan monarchy, while participants (ideally senators) still make the best historians, it is taken for granted that such characters cannot tell the full story while they are alive, and possibly not at all.[32] Here he sounds the theme already in his late Republican narrative, and in a position where it will also inform our reading of his later description of Sallust. The question arises of whether Cicero's tactic of waiting for posthumous publication can be viewed as a success. In the short term, he manages to not offend Caesar and Crassus, but it is less clear that Dio thinks of the book as doing its job in the perhaps unwelcoming environment of the Triumviral or Augustan periods. Dio's language does not suggest that he thought of the book as widely read, or possibly even available, in his own time, nor does his account of the relevant moments in Cicero's career suggest the influence of such a narrative.[33] Posthumous publication ensures one's own safety, but then one can never know or influence the fate of one's writings.

Dio is clearly preoccupied with the same dichotomy between speech and safety as it played out for Cicero in 43 BCE, when the orator made the opposite choice by attacking Antony openly, and suffered accordingly, as Philiscus had foreseen with suspicious accuracy.[34] The same part of Dio gives us a further clue about historiography, since Cicero's other known historical work, a Greek account of his consulship, comes in for ridicule as part of the "counter-Philippic" Dio puts in the mouth of Fufius Calenus (Cass. Dio 46.21.3–4 = Cicero T6). The overall impression one gets is that Philiscus' version of history-writing in sheltered exile was at odds with Cicero's character but also impossible in his

32 In his most famous observations on this problem (53.19), Dio refers mostly to the informational problems of an authoritarian regime, which Cicero would not have faced. However, those informational problems presuppose that even the few who know facts are prevented from revealing them by the realities of power, in ways that do have their analogues in Dio's late Republic. For further examination of this question, see Kemezis 2021.

33 Of the testimonia and fragments in *FrHist.*, none later than Asconius (F4) seems to me to require the author's direct access to the full text, though one mention in Fronto (T13) comes close. Drummond (in *FrHst.*, 1.379) finds it unlikely Dio consulted the work directly. As to influence (direct or otherwise) on Dio's narrative, we know from Plutarch (*Crass.* 13.4) that the work emphasized Caesar's and Crassus' roles in the Catilinarian conspiracy, whereas Dio's account of the plot does not implicate the former at all and if anything exculpates the latter (37.25.1–2). It is possible that Dio's account of Crassus turning letters over to Cicero (37.31.1) derives from Cicero's Greek history of his consulate, an earlier and evidently more temperate work than the *De consiliis suis*.

34 The prediction comes at 38.29.2. For the thematic significance of Cicero's *parrhēsia* in the "Philippic," see Mallan 2016.

political world. Historiography for him as for Sallust is a pursuit full of potential dangers that are impossible to anticipate except through reticence.

4 Cremutius Cordus

The dangers of historiography had no need of artificial emphasis in the case of Cremutius Cordus. His name inevitably evoked the lethal consequences of political speech. In 25 CE, he committed suicide in the face of a *maiestas* prosecution based at least ostensibly on a history he had written covering the Civil Wars of the 40s and 30s BCE and part of Augustus' reign.[35] The history had evidently been warmer toward Brutus and Cassius and cooler toward the Caesars than was customary in the political discourse of Tiberius' time. Although it was officially condemned along with its author, copies of it were circulated in Caligula's time, albeit with some expurgations, and remained available into the second century. It is possible that Dio used it as a source for the triumviral period, although our fragments of Cordus do not permit firm conclusions.[36]

Cordus is mentioned honorably by Seneca the Younger (*Cons. ad Marc.* 1.2–4, 22.4–8) and Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.104), but we know him above all from Tacitus, who in Book 4 of the *Annales* gives the historian's trial extended treatment (§34–35). Tacitus' telling of the story is highly emotive, with a direct-discourse oration, and is a key source for modern discussions of freedom of speech in the early Empire. It is also clearly programmatic for the author, coming as it does after a first-person excursus (§32–33) on the challenges of writing history in and about the monarchical state. Tacitus aims to stress the ever more tyrannical circumstances of Tiberius' reign, and for him, Cordus represents the kind of *libertas* and truth-telling that upright rulers can (or at any rate should) tolerate but tyrants cannot. As such, Cordus earns genuine glory in his martyrdom:

35 For a brief introduction to Cordus' history, see Levick in *FrHist.*, 1.497–501, and now the edition of Lentano 2021. The bibliography on his trial is extensive, but typically weighted toward exegesis of Tacitus' account: Recent studies include Moles 1998; Meier 2003; McHugh 2004; Sailor 2008, 250–313; Wisse 2013; Strunk 2017, 157–165. We have no direct evidence for his senatorial offices or activities (noted by Woodman 2018, 207), but Levick and others have typically inferred his status both from the venue of his trial and from his protest against Sejanus' statue (Sen. *Cons. ad Marc.* 22.4).

36 Westall 2016 has recently argued for Cordus as Dio's main source for the 40s and 30s BCE, while Millar 1964, 85 more tentatively suggests him for the early reign of Augustus. Manuwald 1979, 254–257 is rather more agnostic, as is Potter in this volume.

> *Quo magis socordiam eorum inridere libet qui praesenti potentia credunt extingui posse etiam sequentis aevi memoriam. Nam contra punitis ingeniis gliscit auctoritas, neque aliud externi reges aut qui eadem saevitia usi sunt nisi dedecus sibi atque illis gloriam peperere.*
>
> Thus, one is all the more inclined to deride the stupidity of those who suppose that, because for a time they are powerful, they can also erase the memory of ages to come. On the contrary, talent punished grows in stature. Foreign kings, and those who have practiced the same brutality, have brought nothing but disgrace upon themselves and to the authors' glory.

It is against this edifying background that we can read Dio's version of the events, as preserved by Xiphilinus. It contains no speech by Cordus, but rather more factual details in Dio's own voice (57.24.2–4):[37]

> Κρεμούτιος δὲ δὴ Κόρδος αὐτόχειρ ἑαυτοῦ γενέσθαι, ὅτι τῷ Σεϊανῷ προσέκρουσεν, ἠναγκάσθη· οὕτω γὰρ οὐδὲν ἔγκλημα ἐπαίτιον λαβεῖν ἠδυνήθη (καὶ γὰρ ἐν πύλαις ἤδη γήρως ἦν καὶ ἐπιεικέστατα ἐβεβιώκει) ὥστε ἐπὶ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ, ἣν πάλαι ποτὲ περὶ τῶν τῷ Αὐγούστῳ πραχθέντων συνετεθείκει καὶ ἣν αὐτὸς ἐκεῖνος[38] ἀνεγνώκει, κριθῆναι, ὅτι τόν τε Κάσσιον καὶ τὸν Βροῦτον ἐπῄνεσε, καὶ τοῦ δήμου τῆς τε βουλῆς καθήψατο, τόν τε Καίσαρα καὶ τὸν Αὔγουστον εἶπε μὲν κακὸν οὐδέν, οὐ μέντοι καὶ ὑπερεσέμνυνε. ταῦτά τε γὰρ ᾐτιάθη, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα αὐτός τε ἀπέθανε, καὶ τὰ συγγράμματα αὐτοῦ τότε μὲν ⟨τά τε⟩ ἐν τῇ πόλει εὑρεθέντα πρὸς τῶν ἀγορανόμων καὶ τὰ ἔξω πρὸς τῶν ἑκασταχόθι ἀρχόντων ἐκαύθη, ὕστερον δὲ ἐξεδόθη τε αὖθις (ἄλλοι τε γὰρ καὶ μάλιστα ἡ θυγάτηρ αὐτοῦ Μαρκία συνέκρυψεν αὐτά) καὶ πολὺ ἀξιοσπουδαστότερα ὑπ' αὐτῆς τῆς τοῦ Κόρδου συμφορᾶς ἐγένετο.

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37 It is not inconceivable that Dio's original account included a speech for Cordus, but it is quite unlikely. There is no solid parallel for Xiphilinus including so much detail from the narrative immediately surrounding a speech without at least mentioning that the speech occurred. Of the speeches fully extant Dio, the majority receive at least a one-sentence notice in Xiphilinus saying the person spoke, and for the others (the three Caesarian speeches, the Cicero-Calenus debate, the pre-Actium speeches, Augustus' speeches on marriage), their entire narrative context is omitted as well. The closest to an exception is that in the three-part debate on Pompey's naval command in Book 36 the first and last speeches are mentioned in detail (see Boissevain 1895–1901, 3.480), but if we only had Xiphilinus we would have no idea of the second oration by Gabinius. However, in that instance Xiphilinus still omits Gabinius entirely along with his speech.

38 Mallan 2020, 66 translates this clause as "a work which he himself had read to Augustus," following Hermann Peter's suggestion of emending to ἐκείνῳ. This matches the details given by Suetonius (*Tib.* 61.3), for which see the next note.

> Cremutius Cordus was forced to become his own murderer, because he had offended Sejanus. Since no criminal charge could be brought against him (he being on the threshold of old age and having lived with the utmost mildness), he was prosecuted for his history of the deeds of Augustus, which he had composed a long while before and which Augustus himself had read. The accusation was that he had praised Cassius and Brutus, had chastised the people and the Senate and, without actually saying anything bad about Caesar or Augustus, had still not given them any special reverence. That was the charge and for that he died. His writings were burned by the aediles if found in the city, and abroad by the various governors. They were brought back out later on (his daughter Marcia, especially, had hidden them away) and became the object of much more attention precisely because of Cordus' fate.

Dio contradicts none of Tacitus' facts, but tells a very different story. The earlier historian had mentioned Sejanus' role (*Ann.* 4.34.1), but with nothing like Dio's explicit distinction between pretext and real cause: In Tacitus' version, as is evident from the quotation above, the histories themselves are positioned as a real motivation for Tiberius and his regime. Further, in revealing that the histories were composed some time before and had been read by (or to) Augustus, Dio shows Tacitus to be guilty of an obfuscation not unlike what Dio himself had done with Sallust.[39] Tacitus' narrative gives every impression that the punishment followed relatively quickly on the "crime." His Cordus lists any number of men who had written safely under Augustus but somehow manages to leave himself off the list. This omission seems like a lapse in forensic verisimilitude, but is understandable given what Tacitus is doing with the speech. For him, this is a story about Cordus exercising his freedom to tell the truth and maintaining his integrity in the face of the punishments that follow from such conduct under a tyrant: Any suggestion of receiving approval at an earlier point would detract from this image. To say, "I should not be punished for telling the truth" is very different from, "I should not be punished for doing something Augustus said was all right."

39 A similar detail is given by Suetonius (*Tib.* 61.3) who specifies that the histories *probarentur ante aliquot annos etiam Augusto audiente recitata* ("had been well received some years before when they were recited with Augustus himself in the audience"), though Dio's version (at least as given by Xiphilinus) makes the reading sound more like Augustus' personal *imprimatur*. Various explanations for Tacitus' omission, other than compositional choice, are canvassed by Bauman 1974, 102–103. Sailor 2008, 296–297 treats it as a deliberate tactic.

Dio's Cordus, by contrast, is a distinctly unlikely martyr. Dio stresses the lack of any politically subversive activity in his long and innocuous life.[40] The closest anyone can come is his writings, and even these are made to sound as mild as possible. The detail of Augustus' having read or heard the histories is given not as proof of his tolerance but of their inoffensiveness. Nowhere does one recognize the *libertas* that Quintilian had found in even the expurgated writings (*Inst.* 10.1.104 = Cordus T5). Dio portrays a circumspect man who tried to write in safety, thought he had succeeded and was shocked when it proved otherwise. We know from Seneca (*Cons. ad Marc.* 22.4 = Cordus T2) that Cordus had earned Sejanus' wrath by pointedly protesting a statue of the latter, but Dio's very brief wording (at least in Xiphilinus: τῷ Σεϊανῷ προσέκρουσεν) suggests more a blunder than real opposition.[41] At any rate, Dio draws no connection between the insult to Sejanus and the content of Cordus' work, and, in fact, the truth or ideological meaning of the writings is not at issue. His enemies were looking for an excuse, and even basically harmless material served their purpose. Thus, Dio's final remark about the survival of the histories is very different in tone from Tacitus'. There is no mention of glory or *auctoritas*, rather we hear neutrally that Cordus' death made his works "more worthy of attention" (ἀξιοσπουδαστότερα), which might be taken to suggest that their content was not in itself especially exciting. The irony is all the greater if Dio used the works himself: Perhaps they were indeed worthwhile, but many fewer people would have noticed if their author had not been executed for reasons that were really unrelated.[42]

This sardonic rather than sententious ending reminds one of Dio's version of Sallust. Both characters are *exempla* not of the nobility of history-writing but of its unpredictability. It is yet another of many things that can turn out for the worse in a world dominated by the likes of Caesar and Sejanus. In short, Dio seems curiously disenchanted with the genre to which he claims to have dedicated some decades of his life. A brief survey of Dio's other references to historians largely confirms this impression. As best I can determine, Dio's surviving narrative includes thirty-seven characters who are attested as authors

40 For the contrast in this respect between the two accounts, see Sailor 2008, 295–296; Strunk 2017, 159.

41 The verb προσκρούω, though rare in historians generally, is frequent in Dio and refers to actions or consequences that the actor never desires and often cannot control or tries to avoid. See, e.g., 36.22.5 (people meeting pirates); 37.56.1 (Caesar wary of offending Pompey); 40.57.1 (censors avoid offending anyone); 69.23.2 [EV] (Hadrian punishes those who offend him).

42 This reasoning is in fact found explicitly in Tacitus (*Ann.* 14.50), but referring to the Neronian senator Fabricius Veiento, whose scurrilous *codicilli* allegedly ceased to be read as soon as they were no longer prohibited.

of works of history or biography (see Table 15.1). All but one of these (Flavius Josephus) are members of the senatorial order, including eight emperors. Dio has included no purely literary anecdotes about such non-senatorial characters as Livy or Appian. If from the thirty-seven one excludes the emperors and other major historical actors, there are between twelve and fifteen characters that one might call "anecdotal," people who are the focus of at most a short episode that might perhaps not have been included if the person were not also an author.

All of these men are shown in their senatorial guise as administrators, generals and courtiers, but there is little positive exemplarity to be found in the stories Dio chooses to tell of them, and much of the powerlessness and unpredictability we have seen with the longer episodes. Probably the only historian that appears in an unambiguously good light in Dio is Arrian, who sees off the Alans, although even there Parthian bribery is also given as a factor (69.15.1 [EU^{R}]). Marius Maximus at least gets to restore some dignity to the Senate by replacing Macrinus' buffoonish appointee Oclatinius Adventus as urban prefect (79[78].14.2–3). Cluvius Rufus, by contrast, acts as a herald for Nero's travesties in Greece (62[63].14.3 [Xiph.]). Cornelius Sisenna tries ineffectually to dissuade Metellus Creticus from brutality in his conquest of his namesake island (36.18.1). Asinius Pollio cuts an undignified figure against Sextus Pompey in Spain, when he flees a battle leaving behind his general's cloak, which in turn leads his men to believe him dead and surrender (45.10.3–5). Dio makes rather more of this episode than he does of Pollio's later conquest of the Illyrian Parthini, for which he triumphed.[43] And Dio is sure to tell us about Q. Dellius' desertion of Antony before the Battle of Actium (50.23.1), having earlier provided the gratuitous detail that Dellius had at one time been the future triumvir's *paidika* (49.39.2). In most of these cases, the character is not identified as an author, and there is no explicit reflection on his writings. Dio's audience would naturally have had a varying acquaintance with different authors, but whatever they did recognize would, given ancient reading practices, have been seen as in some measure a reflection on the author's own task, and it is with the figure of Dio that we will conclude.

5 Dio's Career

The one historian who recurs most as a character in Dio is, to be sure, Dio himself. The Severan historian is happy to share selective details of his career and of his literary activities. Andrew Scott has recently posited a useful distinction

43 The campaign is mentioned in one short sentence (48.41.7) with nothing about a triumph.

between the characters Dio assumes as senatorial participant-observer and as author.[44] The former figure is deliberately portrayed as ineffectual and undignified, partaking of the overall degradation of his peers under the Severan emperors. The latter, however, is in Scott's view a more effective agent, writing from a safely isolated retirement. My last contention in this article is that while the idea of writing in retirement as a preferred alternative to public life is present in Dio's text, it is heavily, though not entirely, undercut with qualifications that emerge if we read key methodological passages in light of Dio's descriptions of earlier senatorial historians.

The first such passage is Dio's most extended piece of self-narration, which comes toward the end of the reign of Commodus (73[72].23 [Xiph.]). The historian explains that this moment was the start of "great wars and civil conflict" (πόλεμοι δὲ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ στάσεις μέγισται) and also the genesis of his historical project. The notion of a contemporary reporter recognizing the momentous events around him has a familiar Thucydidean ring, but what follows is thus all the more unexpected. Dio describes how initially (apparently in the 190s) he wrote two shorter works, one about the dreams and omens surrounding Septimius Severus' rise to power and another seemingly about the wars in which he came to power.[45] It was Severus' approval of these efforts, along with divine encouragement in a dream, that prompted Dio to write the larger-scale history that we have now. In short, Dio began his literary career as a propagandist for the Severan regime.

These actions are unremarkable in themselves: All the principals in the wars will have had their literary apologists.[46] But for Dio to identify his own work with such a project is a profound departure from the normal tropes of grand historiography, which stressed the author's independence and lack of bias.[47] We are certainly meant to notice our historian's disregard for these well-known generic expectations, but it is less clear what we are supposed to make of it. Dio places himself in a disarmingly self-serving light but appears to leave out crucial information both about his own allegiances in the wars and his fortunes under the victorious Severan regime.[48] Two things do become evident in the succeeding narrative. First, that Severus' rule was not what Dio had hoped for

44 See Scott 2017b.

45 For the possible content and extent of the first two works, see esp. Slavich 2001, also Rubin 1980, 41–84; Schmidt 1997.

46 We know both of an autobiographical work by Severus himself and a Greek history by Antipater of Hierapolis (Philost. *VS* 607). See Rubin 1980, 25–27.

47 For this discourse, see Luce 1989; Marincola 1997, 158–174.

48 For Dio's reticence about his own and other senators' roles in these wars, see Kemezis 2020. The absence is sufficiently consistent and marked that it must be seen as a conscious strategy rather than an effect of our incomplete text.

at the time he wrote the initial works.[49] Second, that the larger work we have now was not the one Severus would have hoped for at the time he encouraged the younger Dio. The thirty-plus years from the start of Dio's project saw its endpoint change as emperors died, but also its political orientation, as the historian becomes ever more critical in his accounts of later members of the dynasty.

We never learn in detail what happened to Dio's career under Severus and Caracalla, and indeed modern scholars cannot agree whether Dio was "in" or "out" politically in this period. The vicissitudes Dio attributes to Sallust and Cordus, however, signal to us that changes in the political wind blow little good. The parallel with Cordus' reading his histories to Augustus only to suffer under Tiberius is particularly strong here. I am not suggesting we should directly infer facts about Dio's career based on what happens to his characters. But it is standard across genres in antiquity that when characters in a literary work are also authors, their roles may be read as a metaliterary commentary on the implied author of the work in which they appear.[50] If Dio tells us he began his history as a self-serving political gesture, he has earlier created the expectation that such gestures typically misfire.

Similarly, when in the same passage Dio identifies his patron goddess as Fortune (Τύχη) and claims that she "restores my strength to write history at times when I feel diffident or hesitant," (ἐπιρρωννύουσάν με πρὸς τὴν ἱστορίαν εὐλαβῶς πρὸς αὐτὴν καὶ ὀκνηρῶς διακείμενον) we should be alert for irony. To judge from other historians in Dio (and much else in the narrative content), his version of Τύχη is not the hidden providential force she was for Polybius, but instead a basically chaotic actor who dealt very roughly with Sallust, Cordus and many others. Dio refers to her as offering hopes and promises but is curiously silent on the subject of fulfillment.[51]

If we move a few books forward in the history, we find a clearer analogy to an earlier anecdote and character. In his account of 202–204 CE, Dio tells us that (77[76].2.1–2 [Xiph.]):[52]

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49 Key passages expressing disappointment with Septimius are 75[74].2.1–2 (Xiph.) and 76[75].7.4 (Xiph.). For how this sense affects the overall tenor of Dio's work, see most recently Madsen 2016 and Zecchini 2016.

50 The technique is more common in poetry, but in historiography the best example is undoubtedly Tacitus' treatment of Cordus, on which see Sailor 2008, 250–313, along with other references in n. 35 above.

51 For other readings of Τύχη/*Fortuna* as patroness, and the dream narrative in general, see Rubin 1980, 44–53; Marincola 1997, 48–51. Jones in this volume compares her presence in Dio with her role in prose-fiction genres.

52 Because Dio appears to describe the (otherwise unattested) eruption of Vesuvius in the context of Severus' *decennalia* of 202 CE, it is usually assigned to that year (see e.g. Sordi 2000; Freyburger-Galland 2004; Letta 2007). However, this part of the text, at least as Xiphilinus has left it to us, is very confused chronologically (see Scott 2017a), and the

> ἐν δὲ τῷ Βεσβίῳ τῷ ὄρει πῦρ τε πλεῖστον ἐξέλαμψε καὶ μυκήματα μέγιστα ἐγένετο, ὥστε καὶ ἐς τὴν Καπύην, ἐν ᾗ, ὁσάκις ἂν ἐν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ οἰκῶ, διάγω, ἐξακουσθῆναι· τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ χωρίον ἐξειλόμην τῶν τε ἄλλων ἕνεκα καὶ τῆς ἡσυχίας ὅτι μάλιστα, ἵνα σχολὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀστικῶν πραγμάτων ἄγων ταῦτα γράψαιμι. ἐδόκει οὖν ἐκ τῶν περὶ τὸ Βέσβιον γεγονότων νεοχμόν τι ἔσεσθαι, καὶ μέντοι καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν Πλαυτιανὸν αὐτίκα ἐνεοχμώθη.
>
> On Vesuvius a massive fire blazed forth and there were great roaring noises that could be heard in Capua, the town where, when I reside in Italy, I spend time. I picked out this district especially for its tranquillity, so that there, enjoying leisure from the cares of the city, I might write these lines. What happened on Vesuvius suggested that some great change was coming, and indeed straightaway there was a great change, in the situation of Plautianus.

The Campanian *locus amoenus* suggests Philiscus' advice to Cicero about writing history in leisured exile. However, Cicero's failure to follow Philiscus' advice, as well as Dio's general refusal to associate historians with peace or safety, should give us pause. Dio only invokes this idyll in the optative, as an intention, and perhaps he means to deny its full attainability. We do, after all, learn about the retreat only in the context of its being disturbed by a volcanic eruption, which in turn is linked to a violent political upheaval.

Lastly, the repeated play Dio has made with the figure of the retired and/or exiled historian brings us to the final years of his own career. These are described in the coda to the history that sketches the first half of Alexander Severus' reign, from 222–229 CE. Dio first mentions that this period included for him a series of provincial administrative posts and an illness, all of which required his nearly continuous absence from Rome until 229, the year of his second consulship (80[80]1.2–2.1 [Xiph.]). On that occasion, however, Τύχη proved an unreliable patroness. As Dio tells it (80[80].4.2–5.2 [Xiph]), the Praetorian Guard mutinied against him personally before his consulship and demanded that Alexander hand him over to them. The emperor refused and made signs of his confidence in Dio, but still required him to remain away from Rome during his term as consul. Dio did later return briefly to Rome and Alexander, but thereupon "I departed for home, pleading an illness of the feet, thus to live out all my remaining days in my homeland" (ἀπῆρα οἴκαδε

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passage about the eruption could refer to any time up to the fall of Plautianus in early 205. Indeed, Dio's αὐτίκα suggests a date later in the range rather than earlier.

παρέμενος ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν ποδῶν ἀρρωστίᾳ, ὥστε πάντα τὸν λοιπὸν τοῦ βίου χρόνον ἐν τῇ πατρίδι ζῆσαι). Once he arrives in Bithynia, the divine spirit (τὸ δαιμόνιον) tells him in a dream to place at the end of his work a Homeric quotation (*Il.* 11.163–164) about Zeus taking Hector away from the violence of battle. He interprets this to mean that he will never again leave Nicaea, and we have no reason to suppose he did.

How one views this episode depends heavily on how much irony one is willing to see in Dio's last lines. It is possible to read the departure for Nicaea as a voluntary retirement in which Dio, disillusioned with Rome, genuinely seeks out the peace and belonging that Nicaea offers, there to write a properly critical history, as the privilege of a politically harmless old age.[53] One might, however, read the "ill health" as a deliberately transparent cover story for Dio being exiled to a "home" that was rather less congenial to him than Rome or Italy.[54] The idea of permanent safety on this side of the grave is undercut as well: Hector, after all, does not die in bed.

In this connection, one naturally looks back on the various versions of this scenario that Dio has already described. If Dio really does see himself as winning a moral victory by telling his story from a secure and tranquil position, then he is the first senatorial author in his pages to succeed in this feat. Rutilius Rufus is perhaps the closest to Dio's situation, since his case specifically raises the question of voluntary versus enforced exile. Yet Dio has seemingly gone out of his way to avoid identifying Rutilius as an author. Similarly, he has obscured those aspects of Sallust's career that might most suggest a positive parallel for his own.[55] On the other hand, he has deliberately stressed the age and political harmlessness of Cordus in a way that calls into question how safe Dio would be publishing in retirement from Nicaea. Dio may well be suggesting he will

53 For Nicaea and voluntary retirement, see e.g. Ameling 1984, 138. As regards safely writing critical history, see Kaldellis 2017, 52–53, arguing against the idea of Dio publishing posthumously.

54 Similarly, Dio's remark that he had left "pleading an illness of the feet" may recall Claudius Pompeianus, the courtier of Marcus who used an eye disorder as an excuse to leave Commodus' Rome, but experienced a convenient though temporary remission under Pertinax (74[73].3.2–3 [EV]). For the idea of one's πατρίς as a place of exile, see 74(73).11.2 (Xiph.), where Didius Julianus is exiled (ἐξελήλατο) to Milan under Commodus.

55 One experience he does share with Sallust is failure in the face of mutinous troops (and ineffectual protection by one's political superiors), and the general thematic prominence of mutiny in the Caesarean narrative is an argument for seeing those books as composed or heavily revised after Dio's experience in 229 (see Letta 1979, 163–166).

follow Cicero's path of publishing after death, perhaps with a wry acknowledgement that his much grander work may fall into the same obscurity as the *De consiliis*.

The picture I have sketched requires many dots to be connected, and naturally, not all readers will have connected them all. However, one cannot deny that the relationship of the author's experience to his work is a critical aspect of Dio's self-portrait, and the cumulative weight of the earlier anecdotes does much to influence how readers will approach this salient theme. It is widely agreed that Dio identifies heavily with the traditional figure of the senator as historian. I have argued, however, that his identification is curiously unorthodox. One might have expected Dio's predecessors to provide him with a rich source of *exempla*, precedents and generic conventions from which to draw his authority, or (as in Tacitus' prefaces) negative models against which to position himself explicitly. Instead, he tells a series of stories about them that defeat standard expectations and seem to undermine his own authority. If we are not allowed to admire Sallust or Cordus, how are we to feel about Dio?

To be sure, Dio's ambivalent treatment of earlier historians does not negate the ideological commitment to the Senate's role that we find in his text, especially in its more prescriptive sections. It does, however, make that role more complicated than moderns have sometimes acknowledged. Readers are not asked simply to accept Dio's account based on status claims, because he is who he is. The literary heritage of senatorial authors has become devalued along with their political power; indeed, Dio's account makes us question whether that heritage ever did function at face value. Dio seems not so much to inherit his predecessors' authority as to retroactively bequeath them his own anxieties.[56] The Severan senator's experience of public life and his reading of earlier historians together give him not only wide knowledge but also an understanding of the limitations of his status and the cultural authority it gives him. That understanding, in turn, gives Dio's implied author a shrewdness and an ironic self-awareness that produce a rhetorical authority very different from what a Cato or Cicero had imagined. Dio's narrator can come across as something of an *ancien régime* relic, relying on an outdated prestige to support opinions at odds with contemporary reality. When we read these assertions, however, we need to see behind them an author who well knows the diminished worth of his patrimony, literary as well as political, and is enough a creature of his time to exploit that knowledge as best he can.

56 For the ambivalence of senatorial identity in Dio's contemporary narrative, see Gleason 2011.

TABLE 15.1 Historical authors mentioned in Dio[a]

Name (*FrHist.*)	Historical works mentioned?	First and other significant reference
Cato the Elder (5)	N	Bk. 18 (Zon. 9.17)
C. Gracchus (11)	N	25.85 (EV)
Rutilius Rufus (21)	N	28.97 (EV), extended narrative of trial and condemnation
Sulla (22)	N	Frg. 102 (EV)
Hortensius (31)	N	36.1a (Xiph.), refuses provincial command
Cicero (39)	Y	36.1a (Xiph.), also 38.28.1–2 (Philiscus advises history) and 39.10.2–3 (*De consiliis suis*)
Lucullus (23)	N	36.1b (Xiph.)
Cornelius Sisenna (26)	N	36.18.1, vainly counsels Metellus Creticus before dying
Q. Lutatius Catulus (19)	N	36.30.4, delivers speech against Pompey's pirate command
Julius Caesar	Y	37.8.1, reference to *Anti-Cato* at 43.13.4, commentaries not mentioned
Sallust	Y	40.63.4, also 42.53.2 and 43.9.2–3, with histories mentioned in last
M. Terentius Varro (52)	N	41.23.2, as Pompeian commander in Spain
Augustus (60)	Y	45.1.1, writings mentioned at 44.35.3 and 48.44.4
Asinius Pollio (56)	N	45.10.3–5, military failure against Sex. Pompeius
A. Hirtius	N	46.36.2, military success against Antony before death
Valerius Messalla Corvinus (61)	N	47.11.4, survives being proscribed

a This table includes all persons who have an entry in *FrHist.* (entry numbers in parentheses) and figure as characters in Dio, plus Julius Caesar, Sallust, A. Hirtius (as continuator of Caesar), Josephus, Arrian and the emperor Caracalla. I have however omitted one figure from *FrHist.* whose identity and works are too dubious to count (C. Furnius [#50]) and three consuls whom Dio mentions only for purposes of dating or other generic aspects of that office (M. Valerius Messalla Rufus [42]; L. Arruntius the Elder [58] and M. Servilus Nonianus [79]). I have also omitted passages such as 67.12.4 (Xiph.) where an author (in this case Livy) is named solely to identify their works and does not feature as a character.

TABLE 15.1 Historical authors mentioned in Dio (*cont.*)

Name (*FrHist.*)	Historical works mentioned?	First and other significant reference
Tiberius (73)	N	48.15.4
M. Vipsanius Agrippa (59)	N	48.20.1
Cornelius Balbus (41)	N	48.32.2, mentioned as Spanish, a consul and extremely rich
Q. Dellius (53)	N	49.39.2, as Antony's ambassador and former sexual partner
Cremutius Cordus (71)	Y	57.24.2, account of his condemnation
Agrippina the Younger (77)	N	58.20.1
Claudius (75)	Y	59.6.6, writings mentioned at 60.2.1
Vespasian (85)	N	59.12.3
Suetonius Paullinus (83)	N	60.9.1, successful campaign in Mauretania
Domitius Corbulo (82)	N	61[60].30.4 (Xiph.), recalled from Germany by Claudius, quoted
Thrasea Paetus (81)	N	62[61].15.2 (Xiph.), walks out of senate after Agrippina's murder, quoted
Cluvius Rufus (84)	N	62[63].14.3 (Xiph.), acts as herald for Nero in Greece
Flavius Josephus	N	65[66].1.4 (Xiph.), predicts Vespasian's accession
Trajan (96)	N	67.12.1 (Xiph.)
Arulenus Rusticus (88)	Y	67.13.2 (Xiph.), calls Thrasea "holy"
Herennius Senecio (89)	Y	67.13.2 (Xiph.), writes life of Helvidius Priscus
Hadrian (97)	Y	68.33.1 (Xiph.), writings mentioned at 66[66].17.1 (Xiph.) and 69[69].11.2
Arrian	N	69.15.1 (EU), frightens Alani out of invading

TABLE 15.1 Historical authors mentioned in Dio (*cont.*)

Name (*FrHist.*)	Historical works mentioned?	First and other significant reference
Septimius Severus (100)	Y	73[72].12.4 (Xiph.), writings mentioned at 76[75].7.3 (Xiph.)
Caracalla	Y	76[75].14.3, writings mentioned at 79[78].1.5 (Xiph) and 79[78].2.1
Marius Maximus (101)	N	79[78].14.3, appointed City Prefect, also 79[78].36.1 and 80[79].2.1 as recipient of letters from Macrinus

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PART 4

Hellenic Culture

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CHAPTER 16

Bilingualism and Authority in Cassius Dio

Sulochana Asirvatham

1 Introduction

Cassius Dio's 80-book *Roman History* is a gargantuan work of Greek prose written at a time when Philostratus and other writers were creating gargantuan works of Greek prose.[1] The achievement itself qualifies Dio as a *pepaideumenos*, and the author's sole reference to his own attempt to achieve a pure Attic style shows that he sees himself as part of a larger literary trend.[2] Because of these things, as well as his affinities with other contemporary genres[3] and the influence of Greek literature on his work, Dio is often referred to as a writer of the "Second Sophistic", despite lacking some other important stereotypical features usually associated with the label. For many imperial Greek writers, pride in Greekness was built into the very act of composing literature, especially a kind of literature that drew eclectically from the entire tradition of historical, philosophical, rhetorical, and poetic writings in Greek from Homer through Demosthenes and the historical contexts in which those writings were produced. It is easy to see this kind of activity in broad ideological terms – that is, as a means by which Greek intellectuals living under Roman hegemony could collapse the distance between the present day and the days of Greek independence before the rise of Macedon.[4] Dio, however, shows no attachment to the glories of the Hellenic

1 That Dio considers his work to be monumentally important is indicated by his claim in Book 79(78).10.1–2 that, in a vision after his death, Severus had told him to come closer to him, "that you may learn precisely everything that has been said and done and write about it" (ἵνα πάντα καὶ τὰ λεγόμενα καὶ τὰ γιγνόμενα καὶ μάθῃς ἀκριβῶς καὶ συγγράψῃς). Translations are modified from Cary's Loeb edition (1914–1927).

2 Cass. Dio 55.12.4–5: χρυσοῦν γὰρ δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ τὸ νόμισμα τὸ τὰς πέντε καὶ εἴκοσι δραχμὰς δυνάμενον κατὰ τὸ ἐπιχώριον ὀνομάζω· καὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων δέ τινες, ὧν τὰ βίβλια ἐπὶ τῷ ἀττικίζειν ἀναγινώσκομεν, οὕτως αὐτὸ ἐκάλεσαν ("I here use the name χρυσοῦς, according to the Roman practice, for the coin worth one hundred *drachmas*. Some of the Greeks, also, whose books we read with the object of acquiring a pure Attic style, have given it this name").

3 With the novel in particular: See the papers of Jones and Allen in this volume, and Bowersock 1994, 52.

4 Adams (2003b, 185) has shown that for some Romans, speaking Latin was a prerequisite for Romanness. The same idea is often applied to Greek writers of the Second Sophistic: In the absence of political or geographical unity, Greek "national" identity is articulated as mastery over the Greek language.

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past,[5] let alone an interest in creating a fictive kinship with ancient Greeks.[6] Indeed, he rarely makes reference even to the Greek present: This is suggested, for one, by the dearth of references to his own Nicaean background.[7] Dio's references to contemporary Greece may appear in anachronistic forms, though: As Burden-Strevens points out, in the debate with Agrippa prior to the Augustan Settlement of 27 BCE, Maecenas' argument that Augustus should centralize power at Rome and eliminate any display of Greek *polis*-ideology (via coinage, panhellenic games, etc.) (52.30.5) can be seen as a veiled allusion to the present-day situation of the Greek East.[8] But to the extent that Maecenas represents Dio's perspective,[9] it shows the exact opposite of "Greek nostalgia": Instead of seeking to make the Greek past relevant to the Roman present, Dio makes the Roman past relevant to the Greek present.

This stands to reason, as the subject of Dio's *Roman History* is Rome itself, from its origins to the present.[10] As a piece of universal history, it belongs to an originally Greek genre, but the subject of that genre (at least after its beginnings with Ephorus) is inevitably Rome.[11] Dio's work is also a revival of a hitherto Latin genre of senatorial annalistic historiography that was last seen with Tacitus.[12] As such, it reflects Dio's most obvious self-identification: as a

5 Given that some imperial Greek writers characterize him as a Greek hero, we might see Dio's Alexander the Great as a possible exception. Dio's interest in the Macedonian conqueror, however, seems to lie less in the man himself than in Roman imitations of him: that is to say, Alexander is relevant because he is part of Roman history. On Dio's Alexander, see Carlsen 2016; Mallan 2017; and Pownall in this volume.

6 See Aalders 1986 for Dio's aloofness from matters Greek.

7 For the little we know about Dio's Nicaean background, see Kuhn in this volume. Dio refers to Nicaea once as his πάτρις, or homeland: Cass. Dio 69.14.4; 76[75].15.3 (ἐν τῇ Νικαίᾳ τῇ πατρίδι μου); 80[80].1.3; 80[80].5.2–3. Dio also refers to a certain Priscus as his countryman (πολίτης ἐμὸς) in 75[74].11.2. For discussion, see Kemezis 2006, 96–97. Note that Dio does not describe Nicaea as a "Greek" city, nor does he ever call himself a Greek; see Aalders 1986, 283–284. See also Kuhn in this volume on Dio's evident interest in Asia Minor, which she demonstrates is focused on Roman provincial administration, local geography, and *mirabilia* rather than on Greek civic politics and identity.

8 Burden-Strevens 2015, 301–302, making a slightly different point (see n. 22 below).

9 This does not preclude that Agrippa's "utopian" speech to which Maecenas responds also contains elements aligned with Dio's thought: See Espinosa-Ruiz 1982; Adler 2012 with additional bibliography.

10 As Aalders (1986, 283) (following Palm 1959, 81) notes, Dio's Rome is not the entirety of the empire but Rome itself, "the city-state which rules the world".

11 Polybius (5.33.2) called Ephorus the first (and, up to his time, only) writer of universal history, even though his treatment of non-Greek areas was rather limited. For a survey of universal history, see Marincola 2007 with bibliography (179).

12 Kemezis 2014, 18: Dio's *Roman History* is a "Greek-language example of a specifically Roman genre, the senatorial annalistic history."

Roman senator. Whereas earlier universal historians like Diodorus Siculus (1st century BCE) represented the perspective of an "outsider looking in" on Roman power, Dio is a political insider whose main foils are the emperor and the imperial family. In comparison with this senatorial identity, then, Dio's "Greek identity" would seem to be something of a non-issue.

Still, for all his Romanness, it seems unlikely that a writer like Dio, who was born and educated in provincial Asia Minor, would embark on such an ambitious Greek-language project as the *Roman History* without some positive attitude towards the Greek language. Linguistic performance *per se* may not be as central to Dio's project as articulating his own personal analysis of Roman history, but he shows at least one overt sign of language-consciousness beyond his reference to Atticism: an emphasis on Greek-Latin bilingualism, which will be the main subject of our discussion here.[13] Bilingual education is specifically embodied in the *Roman History* by a handful of emperors: Augustus, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Septimius Severus, and less directly Caracalla.[14] Importantly, bilingualism is no guarantee that an emperor will be an excellent ruler. Dio's treatment of incidents in which Tiberius and Claudius refuse to allow Greek in the Senate – which he sees as in constant opposition to the emperor in the present day – suggests that there is a self-reflexivity to his interest

13 This discussion is part of a broader study of Dio's identity as a bilingual senator, forthcoming in the *Brill Companion to Cassius Dio*. There I include consideration, for example, of Dio's not-infrequent "translations" between Greek and Latin, which speaks directly to his interest in bilingual *paideia*. As Mason points out in *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions*, for example, it seems that of all Greek writers Dio uses hard-core Latinisms – that is, terms that are too distinctively Roman to have a Greek equivalent – the most (Mason 1974, 7; 12). Important, too, are the discussions of Freyburger-Galland (1997) and Coudry (2016), which both emphasize the care Dio takes to be as clear as possible when handling Roman institutional vocabulary (see also, e.g., Mason's discussion of Dio's use of πρεσβυτής [153–154]).

14 It should be no surprise in the year 2022 that bilingualism and multilingualism are hot topics for specialists in a multitude of disciplines and, among classicists, especially Romanists; there has been a huge burst of energy in this direction in the last few decades. Some recent work on Rome has emphasized that its history is multilingual, not bilingual, and have gone beyond the reflections of the literary elite on such matters to take into account all sorts of other evidence: archaeological, epigraphical, and papyrological. J.N. Adams' massive *Bilingualism and the Latin language* (Adams 2003a), for example, deals with Latin and all the languages it came into contact with, including Greek but also Oscan, Umbrian, Venetic, Messapic, Etruscan, Celtic, Punic, Libyan, Berber, Aramaic, Hebrew, Germanic, Hispanic languages, Egyptian, Getic and Sarmatian, and Thracian (see also Mullen & James 2012). My focus is admittedly rather narrow, as I am interested in a single elite author in Greek, whose interest in multi-lingual speakers is largely confined to Greek-Latin bilingualism – with the exception of Hannibal.

in emperors' bilingualism.[15] The overall message seems to be that Greek is just as essential as Latin for governing Rome, and that this is best embodied in a person like Dio himself, a Greek senator, rather than an emperor. Before turning to the emperors, therefore, we should briefly consider Dio's own hybrid use of Latin and Greek.

2 Dio's Own Bilingualism

Dio's interest in the motif of imperial bilingualism seems somewhat akin to the preoccupation with Hellenocentric authors' interest in their own use of Greek as well as that of others.[16] But whereas Hellenocentric authors see linguistic prowess as something purely Hellenic, Dio's sense of authority comes from his mastery of not only Greek but also Latin[17] and of the Roman literary and historical traditions, evidenced by the totality of the *Roman History* itself. Like other elite provincial Greeks, Dio's education in his native Bithynia (and perhaps elsewhere in Asia Minor)[18] would have trained him in Greek rhetoric and the Greek literary canon. But Dio does not openly tout the Greek literary roots of his work, either as pure intellectual swagger (as Athenaeus does in his *Deipnosophistae*) or as profound moral engagement (as Plutarch and Aelius Aristides do in their respective praises and detractions of Plato). While his understanding of Roman history is famously influenced by the cynical realism of the master of Greek historiography, Thucydides, Dio only mentions the latter's name once in the extant portions of the *Roman History*, and obliquely rather than openly (i.e., neither within his own narrative nor within the context of political theory).[19] This is also true in the case of other Greek intellectuals

15 Dio also mentions that Cato the Younger was better educated in Greek than Cato the Elder (37.22.1).

16 This article is an expansion on an idea put forth in Asirvatham 2017 on bilingualism as a specific point of pride for both Cassius Dio and Herodian.

17 It is not clear how well Dio knew Latin as a literary language, since Greek-Latin bilingualism appears to have been a feature of western imperial education, but not eastern (Kaimio 1979, 205). What is most important here is that his work demonstrates a knowledge of Roman institutional vocabulary that verifies his closeness, as a senator, to the highest levels of Roman power, and also a knowledge of Roman history that could only have come from Latin sources, whether in the original or in translation (the Suda mentions that the Hadrianic sophist Zenobius [*s.v.* Ζηνόβιος] translated Sallust, at any rate, into Greek).

18 See Kuhn in this volume.

19 There is, however, obvious self-reference here to Dio's own choice of genre. In Cass. Dio 38.28.1–2, the fictional Philiscus consoles Cicero when he is sentenced to exile by suggesting that he write history: παροῦσιν ἐμμείνῃς, μήτι γε καὶ ἀνιαθῇς παρὰ τοῦτο μηδέν. ἂν μὲν γάρ μοι πεισθῇς, καὶ πάνυ ἀγαπήσεις χωρίον τέ τι παραθαλασσίδιον ἔξω πάτου ἐκλεξάμενος, καὶ

like Plato and Aristotle who had a demonstrable influence on Dio[20] but whom, again, he mentions only once each and obliquely.[21] Dio's not-infrequent use of quotations from Homer and other poets brings him closer to Hellenocentric writers like Plutarch; what is distinct is his placement of these quotations in the mouths of Romans.[22] Some of Dio's uses of Greek literature, in fact, are deeply bilingual. For example, in her recent study on Dio's integration of the Demosthenes/Aeschines debate on Philip II of Macedon (a foreigner) into the Cicero/Calenus debate on Antony (a Roman) in Books 45 and 46, Gotteland refers to *langue métisse*, "mixed language",[23] an intertwining of Greek and Roman rhetoric that allows Dio to make his own statement about unchanging aspects of human nature.[24] Perhaps we can see Dio's comments on emperors' Greek-Latin *paideia*, then, as a meta-commentary that bolsters his own image as a bilingual authority on Roman politics.

3 Bilingual Emperors in Dio's *Roman History*

Given that elite Romans were educated in Greek as well as Latin from a young age,[25] there is nothing unusual about the bilingual education of emperors – many of whom composed literature in Greek or are said to have quoted Greek. Kaimio's survey of the evidence in *The Romans and the Greek Language* suggests that, in fact, from Hadrian forward, there were no emperors who did

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ἐν αὐτῷ γεωργῶν τε ἅμα καὶ συγγράφων τι, ὡς Ξενοφῶν, ὡς Θουκυδίδης. τό τε γὰρ εἶδος τοῦτο τῆς σοφίας διαρκέστατόν ἐστι καὶ παντὶ μὲν ἀνδρὶ πάσῃ δὲ πολιτείᾳ ἁρμοδιώτατον, καὶ ἡ φυγὴ φέρει τινὰ σχολὴν γονιμωτέραν. ὥστ' εἴπερ ὄντως ἀθάνατος καθάπερ ἐκεῖνοι γενέσθαι ἐθέλεις, ζήλωσον αὐτούς ("For if you take my advice, you will be quite satisfied to pick out a little estate in some retired spot on the coast and there carry on, at the same time, farming and some historical writing, like Xenophon and like Thucydides. This form of learning is most enduring and best adapted to every man and to every state, and exile brings with it a kind of leisure that is more fruitful. Therefore, if you want to become really immortal like those historians, emulate them"). Presumably we are meant to agree with Philiscus that history-writing is more useful than Cicero's speechifying, as Dio shows the latter to have been fruitless at best and, at worst, self-destructive. See Kemezis in this volume, who notes that the references to Thucydides and Xenophon make this "Greek" advice.

20 See, e.g., Jones 2016.

21 Before Cato commits suicide, he asks for a copy of Plato's book on the soul (*Phaedo*) (Cass. Dio. 43.11.2); Caracalla hates the Aristotelians because Aristotle was supposedly involved in Alexander the Great's death (78[77].7.4) (see below).

22 Burden-Strevens suggests that this is a way of using "Hellenic literate culture to … communicate the Roman world" rather than indicating a nostalgic turn to the past (2015, 302).

23 Gotteland 2015, 289.

24 Also a Thucydidean theme that Dio brings to bear on his interpretations of Roman history: Reinhold 2002, 51–52; Lange 2019; Lange & Scott 2020, 4–5.

25 For literary and epigraphical evidence, see Kaimio 1979, 199–200.

not know Greek; if they are mentioned as deficient in any language, it is Latin (as was the case with the Syrian and Thracian emperors Septimius Severus, Severus Alexander, and Maximinus Thrax).[26] There is plentiful evidence for the bilingual education of emperors and other leaders in literary sources like Suetonius, who remarks on the phenomenon in the cases of Tiberius, Claudius, Octavian/Augustus, Germanicus, Nero, Vespasian and Titus, and in the *Historia Augusta*, which begins with Hadrian and (at least for the period also covered by Dio) attributes bilingual education to Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, Pertinax, Septimius Severus, Elagabalus, and Severus Alexander. Dio's bilingual emperors overlap with only one of Suetonius' seven figures (Octavian) and with only three of the seven figures in the *Historia Augusta* between Hadrian and Alexander (Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Septimius Severus). Given the state of Dio's text, we cannot be certain that the original *Roman History* did not contain more overlap with Suetonius and the *Historia Augusta*; we are on safer ground noting that Dio is more interested in the bilingualism of emperors than his contemporary Herodian, whose text has survived virtually intact. Herodian is, like Dio, keenly interested in the *paideia* of emperors,[27] but only mentions one emperor's bilingualism, and briefly: We learn that Julia Mamaea attempted to steer her young son Alexander Severus clear of his cousin Elagabalus' disgraceful habits by having him educated in both the Greek and Latin systems (Hdn. 5.7.5: παιδείαν τε τὴν Ἑλλήνων καὶ Ῥωμαίων ἐπαίδευεν).

Dio's interest in emperors' bilingualism can be seen as part of the general imperial Greek interest in the *paideia* of rulers. But whereas for Hellenocentric writers, *paideia* is strictly defined as Greek, Dio approaches the subject of bilingual emperors as both a *pepaideumenos* and a senator. Plutarch, who wrote in the time of Trajan, is perhaps the most useful *comparandus*, as he is exceptional among writers of his time for his level of overt interest in Romans. As Swain has noted, Plutarch shows little interest in the influence of Greek culture on Rome as a whole but is nevertheless obsessed with the *paideia* – defined strictly as Greek learning – of his Roman heroes.[28] To put it simply: the greater the (Greek) *paideia*, the greater the Roman. A case in point is Titus Flamininus. Considering Macedonian and Greek viewpoints on two different encounters with the Romans, Plutarch describes Flamininus as a Greek (Ἕλλην) in voice

26 Kaimio, 1979, 130–143.

27 Sidebottom 1998, 2085 sees a close link between Herodian's reading of Roman history and the type of *paideia* he attributes to each ruler of Rome, especially relative to Marcus, whose character is "determined by *aretē* and *paideia*".

28 Swain 1990.

(φωνή) and in language (διάλεκτον) who was also humane (φιλανθρωπός)[29] and a lover of genuine honor (τιμῆς ἀληθοῦς ἐραστής) (Plut. *Flam.* 5.4–6):

> Πύρρον μὲν οὖν λέγουσιν, ὅτε πρῶτον ἀπὸ σκοπῆς κατεῖδε τὸ στράτευμα τῶν Ῥωμαίων διακεκοσμημένον, εἰπεῖν **οὐ βαρβαρικὴν** αὐτῷ φανῆναι **τήν τῶν βαρβάρων παράταξιν οἱ δὲ Τίτῳ πρῶτον ἐντυγχάνοντες ἠναγκάζοντο παραπλησίας ἀφιέναι φωνάς.** ἀκούοντες γὰρ τῶν Μακεδόνων ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἄρχων βαρβάρου στρατιᾶς ἔπεισι **δι᾽ ὅπλων πάντα καταστρεφόμενος καὶ δουλούμενος,** εἶτα ἀπαντῶντες ἀνδρὶ τήν τε ἡλικίαν νέῳ καὶ **τήν ὄψιν φιλανθρώπῳ, φωνήν τε καὶ διάλεκτον Ἕλληνι καὶ τιμῆς ἀληθοῦς ἐραστῇ,** θαυμασίως ἐκηλοῦντο, καὶ τὰς πόλεις ἀπιόντες ἐνεπίμπλασαν εὐνοίας τῆς πρὸς αὐτόν ὡς ἐχούσας **ἡγεμόνα τῆς ἐλευθερίας.**
>
> Now, we are told that Pyrrhus, when for the first time he beheld from a look-out place the army of the Romans in full array, had said that he saw *nothing barbaric* in the *barbarians' line of battle; and so those who for the first time met Titus* [*Flamininus*] *were compelled to speak in a similar strain.* For they had heard the Macedonians say that a commander of a barbarian host was coming against them, *who subdued and enslaved everywhere by force of arms*; and then, when they met a man who was young in years, *humane in aspect, a Greek in voice and language, and a lover of genuine honor,* they were wonderfully charmed, and when they returned to their cities they filled them with kindly feelings towards him and the belief that in him they had *a champion of their freedom* (trans. Perrin).

Plutarch here analogizes two historical encounters with the Romans, around 80 years apart. The first is that of Pyrrhus, who when he first saw the barbarians saw nothing barbaric about them; the second is that of the Greeks of the Second Macedonian War, who had heard the Macedonians characterize Flamininus, in perfectly stereotypical terms, as one "who subdued and enslaved everywhere by force of arms" (δι᾽ ὅπλων πάντα καταστρεφόμενος καὶ δουλούμενος) – something the Greeks would find to be false. Flamininus' appeal to the Greeks, in particular, is his Hellenic nature. Not only does he have the look and emotional disposition of a Hellene, but he also speaks the language fluently, and the Greeks leave their meeting with Flamininus believing that he will protect their freedom. The passage is a perfect example of Plutarchan classicism: His words fully recall the rhetorical opposition between "Greek" and "barbarian"

29 See Martin 1961 for φιλανθρωπία as one of Plutarch's definitively Greek virtues.

that emerged in the writings of Aeschylus and Herodotus in the wake of the Greek defeat of the Persians in the early 5th century BCE (and were revived by Isocrates in particular) – a rhetoric that plays on a range of oppositions including the humane vs. the inhumane, Hellenic vs. barbarian speech, love of honor vs. lack of honor, and freedom vs. slavery.[30] The presence of the Greek language within this dichotomous scheme implies that if Flamininus had spoken only Latin and not Greek, it would have made him more like a barbarian.[31]

Even for Plutarch, however, language choice does not guarantee perfect rule: Flamininus is not without flaws.[32] Similarly for Dio: While Greek-Latin bilingualism is clearly a good thing for an emperor to possess, it has its limits. These respective viewpoints can be seen as part of each writer's sense of authority over how to define good rule. If Plutarch's *philosophia* makes him an expert on the ethics of good rule, it is Dio's sense of his own "bilingual authority" – inevitably melded with his stance of senatorial authority towards the ruling family – that motivates his interest in, as well as his critical view of, emperors' bilingualism.

3.1 *Octavian and Septimius Severus*

Dio's comments on the bilingual educations of both Octavian and Septimius Severus, at the beginning of the empire and during its decline, respectively, are interesting in their limitations. In the case of Octavian, Dio's emphasis is on the political and practical aspects of the young man's education rather than the moral (Cass. Dio 45.2.7–8):

> ἐξ οὖν τούτων ὁ Καῖσαρ μεγάλα ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ ἐπελπίσας ἔς τε τοὺς εὐπατρίδας αὐτὸν ἐσήγαγε καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἤσκει, καὶ πάνθ᾽ ὅσα προσήκει τῷ μέλλοντι καλῶς καὶ κατ᾽ ἀξίαν τηλικοῦτο κράτος διοικήσειν ὑπάρχειν ἀκριβῶς ἐξεπαίδευσε· λόγοις τε γὰρ ῥητορικοῖς, οὐχ ὅτι τῇ τῶν Λατίνων ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇδε τῇ γλώσσῃ, ἠσκεῖτο, καὶ ἐν ταῖς στρατείαις ἐρρωμένως ἐξεπονεῖτο, τά τε πολιτικὰ καὶ τὰ ἀρχικὰ ἰσχυρῶς ἐδιδάσκετο.

30 For the initial creation of Greek identity in opposition to the barbarian other, see especially Hall 1989. For the Roman-era revival see Dmitriev 2011.

31 That the Romans could be seen as semi-barbarous is verified by an earlier passage in which Pyrrhus – whom we should note is, as an Epirote, not quite Greek himself – remarks that, although they are a barbarian people, the orderliness of their camp marks them as non-barbarians, *Pyrrh.* 16.6–7. See Mossman 2005.

32 See, for example, Pelling 2012 on the negative impact of Roman φιλοτιμία in the *Lives* (for Flamininus, see 60–62). The important point here is the contrast with what I see as Dio's more practical understanding of the role of Greek in Roman politics.

> Caesar, accordingly, founded great hopes upon [Octavian] as a result of all this, enrolled him among the patricians, and trained him for the rule, carefully educating him in all the arts that should be possessed by one who was destined to direct well and worthily so great a power. Thus, he was practiced in oratory, not only in the Latin language but in Greek [lit. "in this language"] as well, and was vigorously trained in military service, and thoroughly instructed in politics and the art of government.

Caesar trained Octavian specifically in the art of ruling, and as a result, the young man became a seasoned orator, not only in the Latin language but also in Greek; Caesar also provided training in the realms of war and politics. This positive assessment of Octavian is of a piece with Dio's generally positive attitude towards the man who will turn out to be Augustus.[33] But it is understated. It is worth noting that Augustus' education in Greek philosophy is not directly connected to his knowledge of the Greek language. In his post-Actium narrative, Dio lists Augustus' relationship with the philosopher Areius,[34] who taught him, among the pretexts he gives for not destroying the Egyptians and Alexandrians after his defeat of Antony[35]; we are told separately that he made his announcement to the Alexandrians in Greek (ἑλληνιστί) for a purely practical reason: "so that they might understand him" (ὅπως συνῶσιν αὐτοῦ). Plutarch and Suetonius offer interesting contrasts. Plutarch (*Ant.* 80) refers to Octavian's pardoning of the Alexandrians and his honoring of Areius but does not mention Octavian's use of Greek at Alexandria. Suetonius, on the other hand, nowhere mentions the pardon of the Alexandrians and only mentions Areius in an extended discussion of Augustus' ultimately unsuccessful efforts to become fluent in Greek by employing an army of teachers.[36] If the idea that

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33 As Reinhold & Swan 1990 argue, Dio's treatment of Augustus is more positive than his treatment of Octavian.

34 On the historical implications of the honors Augustus bestowed on Areius, see Bowersock 1965, 33–41.

35 Cass. Dio 51.16.4–5: πρόφασιν … προυβάλλετο τόν τε θεὸν τὸν Σάραπιν καὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν οἰκιστὴν αὐτῶν, καὶ τρίτον Ἄρειον τὸν πολίτην, ᾧ που φιλοσοφοῦντί τε καὶ συνόντι οἱ ἐχρῆτο. καὶ τόν γε λόγον δι' οὗ συνέγνω σφίσιν, ἑλληνιστί, ὅπως συνῶσιν αὐτοῦ, εἶπε ("He offered as a pretext for his kindness their god Serapis, their founder Alexander, and, in the third place, their fellow-citizen Areius, of whose learning and companionship he availed himself. The speech in which he proclaimed to them his pardon he delivered in Greek, so that they might understand him").

36 Suet. *Aug.* 89.1–2: *Ne Graecarum quidem disciplinarum leuiore studio tenebatur. in quibus et ipsis praestabat largiter magistro dicendi usus Apollodoro Pergameno, quem iam grandem natu Apolloniam quoque secum ab urbe iuuenis adhuc eduxerat, deinde eruditione etiam uaria repletus per Arei philosophi filiorumque eius Dionysi et Nicanoris contubernium; non*

Augustus had at some point struggled to learn Greek was in circulation, Dio's inclusion of the *princeps*' display of Greek language-learning at Alexandria may have been intended to rehabilitate that part of the latter's image.

Septimius Severus' bilingualism, on the other hand, is treated as an afterthought, containing neither significant political/practical nor significant moral weight. Severus' obituary, in which Dio mentions his bilingual learning for the first time, paints a more positive picture of the emperor than the foregoing narrative,[37] and yet the reference to his desire to learn more than he did (Cass. Dio. 77[76].16.2–3: παιδείας … ἐπεθύμει μᾶλλον ἢ ἐπετύγχανε) is a bit of a backhanded compliment. The second section of Severus' obituary deals with his peacetime daily rituals at the end of his life, and it is here that we learn Severus conversed in both Greek and Latin as he was walking about (Cass. Dio. 77[76].17.2–3: καὶ λόγοις καὶ Ἑλληνικοῖς καὶ Λατίνοις συνεγίνετο ἐν περιπάτῳ). Overall, the mention of bilingual conversation here appears as a perfunctory observation for an emperor whose rule Dio saw as rather problematic.

Before moving on to Dio's more substantial statements about Marcus Aurelius and Hadrian, it is worth discussing one more figure for whom bilingualism is

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tamen ut aut loqueretur expedite aut componere aliquid auderet; nam et si quid res exigeret, Latine formabat uertendumque alii dabat. sed plane poematum quoque non imperitus, delectabatur etiam comoedia ueteri et saepe eam exhibuit spectaculis publicis. In euoluendis utriusque linguae auctoribus nihil aeque sectabatur, quam praecepta et exempla publice uel priuatim salubria, eaque ad uerbum excerpta aut ad domesticos aut ad exercituum prouinciarumque rectores aut ad urbis magistratus plerumque mittebat, prout quique monitione indigerent ("He had ambitions to be as fluent in Greek as in Latin, and did very well under the tutorship of Apollodorus of Pergamum, who accompanied him to Apollonius, though a very old man, and taught him elocution. Afterwards Augustus spent some time with the philosopher Areius and his sons Dionysius and Nicanor, who broadened his general education; but he never learned to speak Greek with any real fluency, and never ventured on any Greek literary composition. Indeed, if he ever had occasion to use the language he would write down whatever it might be in Latin and get someone to make a translation. Yet nobody could describe him as ignorant of Greek poetry, because he greatly enjoyed Old Comedy and often put plays of that period on the stage. His chief interest in the literature of both languages was the discovery of moral precepts, with suitable anecdotes attached, capable of public or private application, and he would transcribe passages of this sort for the attention of his household, generals and provincial governors, and city magistrates whenever he thought it necessary." Translation by R. Graves).

37 In an unpublished paper delivered at the Society for Classical Studies (2018) entitled "Cassius Dio's Depiction of Septimius Severus: Context and Implications," Scott explains the seeming discrepancy between the largely negative depiction of Severus throughout the narrative and his relatively positive obituary as highlighting the structural difficulties inherent in his kind of rule, which was created by the seizure of the throne by force, regardless of his individual qualities. See also Madsen 2016 and Rantala 2016 on Dio's depiction of Severus.

implied but not outwardly proclaimed: Caracalla. In the course of describing Caracalla's many shortcomings,[38] Dio comments that, even though Caracalla hated "those of us" (ὑμας) – i.e., senators – who had anything of an education (τι παιδείας), Severus had instilled both intellectual and physical education in his son, to the extent that the latter pursued both vigorously, even after he ascended the throne (79[78]11.4)[39]; Dio also remarks that Caracalla was well-spoken and shrewd (79[78]11.4), but that he forgot everything he learned once he'd participated in what we would today call extreme sports: a 100-mile horse ride and rough-water swimming. References to Greek-learning in particular are oblique. Caracalla's "interest" in Greek philosophy appears not as an intellectual pursuit but as part of his obsession with Alexander the Great: Because Aristotle had been implicated in a plot against Alexander's life (Arr. *Anab*. 7.27.1; Plut. *Alex*. 77), the emperor punished the Aristotelians of Alexandria. More noteworthy is an eyewitness moment in which Caracalla quotes Euripides directly to Dio (79[78].8.4–6), an incident the historian says he recalled after Caracalla's assassination and now saw as prophetic of his death. There may be some significance, however, in Dio's comment that, at the time, he dismissed the quote as random chatter: This hardly marks Caracalla as a literary artist, even if his tragic words were fateful.

3.2 *Marcus Aurelius*

Given Marcus' fame as a philosopher and Dio's characterization of his rule as the high point of empire, it is not surprising that Dio includes a moral connection between *paideia* and language-learning in his discussion of Marcus' education. Unlike in Plutarch and other Hellenocentric writers, however, the lauded *paideia* is not Greek but bilingual. In Book 72(71).35–36 (as best we can reconstruct it from Xiphilinus and the *Excerpta Valesiana*),[40] we learn that Marcus had a strong natural disposition towards virtue (ἰσχυρῶς πρὸς ἀρετὴν ὥρμητο), and that this disposition was aided immensely by education in philosophy and rhetoric, to which he remained devoted in adulthood (Cass. Dio 72[71]35.1–2; 6 [Xiph./EV]):

> πάμπολλα μὲν γὰρ καὶ ὑπὸ παιδείας ὠφελήθη, ἔν τε τοῖς ῥητορικοῖς ἔν τε τοῖς ἐκ φιλοσοφίας λόγοις ἀσκηθείς· τῶν μὲν γὰρ τόν τε Φρόντωνα τὸν Κορνήλιον καὶ τὸν Ἡρώδην τὸν Κλαύδιον διδασκάλους εἶχε, τῶν δὲ τόν τε Ῥούστικον τὸν

38 See, e.g., Davenport 2012.

39 On Caracalla's Greek and Latin learning, better attested in the *Historia Augusta* and in Philostratus's *Vitae Sophistarum*, see Meckler 1999.

40 See Boissevain 1901 *ad loc*.

> Ἰούνιον καὶ Ἀπολλώνιον τὸν Νικομηδέα, τοὺς Ζηνωνείους λόγους μελετῶντας, **ἀφ᾽ οὗ δὴ παμπληθεῖς φιλοσοφεῖν ἐπλάττοντο, ἵν᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ πλουτίζωνται.** πλεῖστον δὲ ὅμως ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ἐξήρθη· καὶ γὰρ πρὶν ἐκείνοις ὁμιλῆσαι, **ἰσχυρῶς πρὸς ἀρετὴν ὥρμητο.** (…) **οὕτω μὲν οὖν ἄλλως τε καλῶς ἐπεφύκει καὶ ἐκ τῆς παιδείας ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ὠφελήθη, Ἑλληνικῶν τε καὶ Λατίνων ῥητορικῶν καὶ φιλοσόφων λόγων, καίπερ ἐς ἄνδρας ἤδη τελῶν καὶ ἐλπίδα αὐταρχήσειν.**
>
> [Marcus Aurelius'] education was of great assistance to him, for he had been trained both in rhetoric and in philosophical disputation. In the former he had Cornelius Fronto and Claudius Herodes for teachers, and, in the latter, Junius Rusticus and Apollonius of Nicomedia, both of whom professed Zeno's doctrines. *As a result, great numbers pretended to pursue philosophy, hoping that they might be enriched by the emperor*. Most of all, however, he owed his advancement to his own natural gifts; for, even before he associated with those teachers, *he had a strong impulse towards virtue*. […] *This shows how excellent was his natural disposition, though it was greatly aided by his education. He was always steeping himself in Greek and Latin rhetorical and philosophical learning, even after he had reached man's estate and had hopes of becoming emperor.*

Strikingly, however – especially considering how greatly Dio admires Marcus – the results of his bilingual education are not fully positive. For one thing, it has potentially bad results for the state coffers, in that the emperor's devotion to philosophical learning from teachers, including Roman and Greek philosophers, has encouraged the rise of false philosophers who wish to be enriched by the emperor (παμπληθεῖς φιλοσοφεῖν ἐπλάττοντο, ἵν᾽ ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ πλουτίζωνται).[41] But much worse is the debilitating physical toll Marcus' constant study took on him (Cass. Dio 72[71].36.2 [Xiph./EV]):

> **ἐκ δ᾽ … τῆς πολλῆς ἀσχολίας τε καὶ ἀσκήσεως ἀσθενέστατον τὸ σῶμα ἔσχε,** καίτοι τοσαύτῃ εὐεξίᾳ ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς χρησάμενος ὥστε καὶ ὁπλομαχεῖν καὶ σῦς ἀγρίους ἐν θήρᾳ καταβάλλειν ἀπὸ ἵππου, τάς τε ἐπιστολὰς τὰς πλείστας οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ ἡλικίᾳ ἀλλὰ καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα αὐτοχειρίᾳ τοῖς πάνυ φίλοις γράφειν.

41 In the case of Augustus, by contrast, such men are referenced only indirectly and are not associated with his education: At 52.36.4, Maecenas warns Augustus not to think all philosophers are noble like Areius and Athenodorus, as there are many harmful individuals who use this profession "as a screen" (πρόσχημά).

> *As a result of* [*Marcus'*] *close application and study he was extremely frail in body*, though in the beginning, he had been so vigorous that he used to fight in armor, and on the chase would strike down wild boars while on horseback; and not only in his early youth but even later he wrote most of his letters to his intimate friends with his own hand.

The causal connection between Marcus' *paideia* and his failing body is made clear by the preposition ἐκ, "as a result of". Dio's overall message seems to be that, while Marcus' education was a good thing for his moral character, his excessive pursuit of it had a bad effect on the state financially (at least potentially) as well as militarily, in the sense that its leader could no longer fight on the battlefield. Note that Herodian says something quite different about Marcus' education, as well as his relationship with intellectuals (Hdn. 1.2.3–4):

> ἀρετῆς δὲ πάσης ἔμελεν αὐτῷ, **λόγων τε ἀρχαιότητος ἦν ἐραστής, ὡς μηδενὸς μήτε Ῥωμαίων μήτε Ἑλλήνων ἀπολείπεσθαι·** δηλοῖ δὲ ὅσα καὶ ἐς ἡμᾶς ἦλθεν ἢ λεχθέντα πρὸς αὐτοῦ ἢ γραφέντα. παρεῖχε δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἀρχομένοις ἑαυτὸν ἐπιεικῆ καὶ μέτριον βασιλέα, τούς τε προσιόντας δεξιούμενος κωλύων τε τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν δορυφόρους ἀποσοβεῖν τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας. μόνος τε βασιλέων φιλοσοφίαν οὐ λόγοις οὐδὲ δογμάτων γνώσεσι, σεμνῷ δ' ἤθει καὶ σώφρονι βίῳ ἐπιστώσατο. πολύ τε πλῆθος ἀνδρῶν σοφῶν ἤνεγκε τῶν ἐκείνου καιρῶν ἡ φορά· φιλεῖ γάρ πως ἀεὶ τὸ ὑπήκοον ζήλῳ τῆς τοῦ ἄρχοντος γνώμης βιοῦν.
>
> He was concerned with all aspects of excellence, and *in his love of ancient literature he was second to no man, Roman or Greek*; this is evident from all his sayings and writings which have come down to us. To his subjects he revealed himself as a mild and moderate emperor; he gave audience to those who asked for it and forbade his bodyguard to drive off those who happened to meet him. Alone of the emperors, he gave proof of his learning not by mere words or knowledge of philosophical doctrines but by his blameless character and temperate way of life. His reign thus produced a very large number of intelligent men, for subjects like to imitate the example set by their ruler (my translation).

Herodian does not directly mention the bilingual education of Marcus; he only says that the emperor outstripped all other Roman and Greek men in education. Nor does Herodian otherwise mention the Greek language in his work. There does, however, seem to be a level of self-reflectiveness in Herodian's comments that Marcus produced ἀνδρές σοφοί – wise men, that is, like Herodian and Dio themselves – just by being knowledgeable and virtuous himself. The distinction

between Herodian and Dio is that, while Herodian takes a subordinate stance towards Marcus' intellectual activity, Dio takes an authoritative one: He knows where the emperor's education went right and where it went wrong.

3.3 *Hadrian*

As we see in another fragment reconstructed from Xiphilinus and the *Excerpta*,[42] Hadrian's bilingual education has even more problematic results than Marcus' (Cass. Dio 69.3.1–5 [EV]):

> φύσει δὲ φιλολόγος ἐν ἑκατέρᾳ τῇ γλώσσῃ· καί τινα καὶ πεζὰ καὶ ἐν ἔπεσι ποιήματα παντοδαπὰ καταλέλοιπε. φιλοτιμίᾳ τε γὰρ ἀπλήστῳ ἐχρῆτο, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο καὶ τἆλλα πάντα καὶ τὰ βραχύτατα ἐπετήδευε· καὶ γὰρ ἔπλασσε καὶ ἔγραφε καὶ οὐδὲν ὅ τι οὐκ εἰρηνικὸν καὶ πολεμικὸν καὶ βασιλικὸν καὶ ἰδιωτικὸν εἰδέναι ἔλεγε. καὶ τοῦτο μὲν οὐδέν που τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἔβλαπτεν, ὁ δὲ δὴ φθόνος αὐτοῦ δεινότατος ἐς πάντας τούς τινι προέχοντας ὢν πολλοὺς μὲν καθεῖλε συχνοὺς δὲ καὶ ἀπώλεσε. βουλόμενος γὰρ πάντων ἐν πᾶσι περιεῖναι ἐμίσει τοὺς ἕν τινι ὑπεραίροντας. κἀκ τούτου καὶ τὸν Φαουωρῖνον τὸν Γαλάτην τόν τε Διονύσιον τὸν Μιλήσιον τοὺς σοφιστὰς καταλύειν ἐπεχείρει τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ μάλιστα τῷ τοὺς ἀνταγωνιστάς σφων ἐξαίρειν, τοὺς μὲν μηδενὸς τοὺς δὲ βραχυτάτου τινὸς ἀξίους ὄντας.
>
> Hadrian was naturally fond of literary study in both the Greek and Latin languages and has left behind a variety of prose writings as well as compositions in verse. For his ambition was insatiable, and hence he practiced all conceivable pursuits, even the most trivial; for example, he modeled and painted, and declared that there was nothing pertaining to peace or war, to imperial or private life, of which he was not cognizant. All this, of course, did people no harm; but his jealousy of all who excelled in any respect was most terrible and caused the downfall of many, besides utterly destroying several. For, inasmuch as he wished to surpass everybody in everything, he hated those who attained eminence in any direction. It was this feeling that led him to undertake to overthrow two sophists, Favorinus the Gaul, and Dionysius of Miletus, by various methods, but chiefly by elevating their antagonists, who were of little or no worth at all.

According to Dio, Hadrian naturally inclined towards literary study in both Latin and Greek and even wrote works of prose and poetry. His outsized

42 See Boissevain 1901 *ad loc.*

intellectual ambitions, however, made him exceedingly petty in every way. He attempted to learn everything – whether important or trivial; convinced that he knew everything, he then became so jealous of other accomplished men that he set out to destroy them, including the famous sophists Favorinus and Dionysius, by raising the station of their far inferior competitors. Dio does not have a particularly positive view of sophists, but it is difficult not to see this critique as self-regarding. Here we have an emperor who not only tortures intellectuals of whom he is jealous, but who also thinks that his knowledge of Greek and Latin qualifies him to *write literature*. His intellectual ambitions, which led him to claim that he knew everything about peace, war, imperial and private life (καὶ οὐδὲν ὅ τι οὐκ εἰρηνικὸν καὶ πολεμικὸν καὶ βασιλικὸν καὶ ἰδιωτικὸν εἰδέναι ἔλεγε), were not matched by a learning sufficient to make him a good leader. The very composition of the *Roman History* would suggest that the exact person to whom this claim belongs is someone like Dio himself – a real writer and intellectual who is expert in both Greek and Latin and on all matters public and private – and not to an emperor.

4 Tiberius, Claudius, and the Rejection of Greek in the Senate

Dio is not Hellenocentric, and yet there is evidence that his interest in bilingual emperors is at least partly an interest in the uses and abuses of his own native language – especially in the Senate: That is, Dio offers a couple of mild critiques of moments in which Tiberius and Claudius tried to disallow (even in a limited way) the use of Greek in the Senate.

At 57.15.2, we learn that Tiberius would not allow the word ἐμβλῆμα to be inserted into a decree concerning gold inlay in silver vessels because it was a Greek term (ὡς καὶ Ἑλληνικὸν), and yet (καίτοι) there was no equivalent for it "in the native language" (ἐπιχωρίως). Tiberius would also not allow a centurion to give evidence in Greek, despite the fact that the emperor had heard many cases tried and had even examined witnesses himself in that language in that place (56.15.3–4: καίπερ πολλὰς μὲν δίκας ἐν τῇ διαλέκτῳ ταύτῃ καὶ ἐκεῖ λεγομένας ἀκούων, πολλὰς δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπερωτῶν). Suetonius (*Tib.* 71) tells the same two stories, but with important differences. First of all, while Dio normally uses ἡμεῖς for himself and his fellow-senators – one often-cited indication of his senatorial identity[43] – his use of ἐπιχωρίως acknowledges that there is at least one aspect of Roman culture, language, that is native to Romans "proper" but not to himself. Dio's native language can only be Greek. By contrast, Suetonius

43 See Burden-Strevens 2015, 290–296 on Dio's (and Arrian's) uses of "we".

naturally refers to the language that Tiberius wishes to substitute for the "foreign one" (*pro peregrina voce*) "our language" (*vox nostra*). More importantly, Dio's renditions of these two incidents have an air of complaint that is completely absent from Suetonius. Regarding the ἐμβλῆμα issue, Dio says that the emperor "prevented" (ἐκώλυσεν) the use of Greek for the inlay, *and yet* (καίτοι) there was no Latin equivalent. Suetonius, on the other hand, says that Tiberius "recommended" (*censuit*) that Latin be used, offering two alternatives in case a single Latin word could not be found: that the Greek word be articulated either by many words (*pluribus verbis*) or by periphrasis (*per ambitum uerborum*).[44] Dio uses another concessive conjunction (καίπερ) to introduce his comment on Tiberius' treatment of the soldier: The emperor would not allow him to speak Greek, *even though* he himself was used to hearing and trying cases in Greek. Again, the latter phrasing is absent from Suetonius, who simply says that the soldier, when he was asked in Greek to give testimony, was forbidden to answer except in Latin (*nisi Latine respondere vetuit*). Dio's complaint, as Kaimio points out, is that Tiberius acts inconsistently.[45]

As for Claudius, both Dio and Suetonius tell the story of the emperor taking away citizenship from a Lycian envoy. However, only Dio gives the envoy's lack of Latin as a rationale for it (Cass. Dio 60.17.4–5):

> ἐν δὲ δὴ τῇ διαγνώσει ταύτῃ ἐποιεῖτο δὲ αὐτὴν ἐν τῷ βουλευτηρίῳ ἐπύθετο τῇ Λατίνων γλώσσῃ τῶν πρεσβευτῶν τινος, Λυκίου μὲν τὸ ἀρχαῖον ὄντος Ῥωμαίου δὲ γεγονότος· καὶ αὐτόν, ἐπειδὴ μὴ συνῆκε τὸ λεχθέν, τὴν πολιτείαν ἀφείλετο, εἰπὼν μὴ δεῖν Ῥωμαῖον εἶναι τὸν μὴ καὶ τὴν διάλεξίν σφων ἐπιστάμενον. συχνοὺς δὲ δὴ καὶ ἄλλους καὶ ⟨ὡς⟩ ἀναξίους τῆς πολιτείας ἀπήλασε, καὶ ἑτέροις αὐτὴν καὶ πάνυ ἀνέδην, τοῖς μὲν κατ᾽ ἄνδρα τοῖς δὲ καὶ ἀθρόοις, ἐδίδου.
>
> During the investigation of this affair, which was conducted in the senate, he put a question in Latin to one of the envoys who had originally been a Lycian, but had been made a Roman citizen; and when the man failed to understand what was said, he took away his citizenship, saying that it was not proper for a man to be a Roman who had no knowledge

44 Suet. *Tib.* 71: *sermone Graeco quamquam alioqui promptus et facilis, non tamen usque quaque usus est abstinuitque maxime in senatu; adeo quidem, ut monopolium nominaturus ueniam prius postularet, quod sibi uerbo peregrino utendum esset. atque etiam cum in quodam decreto patrum ἔμβλημα recitaretur, commutandam censuit uocem et pro peregrina nostratem requirendam aut, si non reperiretur, uel pluribus et per ambitum uerborum rem enuntiandam. militem quoque Graece testimonium interrogatum nisi Latine respondere uetuit.*

45 Kaimio 1979, 144.

> of the Romans' language. A great many other persons of citizenship were also deprived of it on the grounds that they were unworthy,[46] whereas he granted citizenship to others quite indiscriminately, sometimes to individuals and sometimes to whole groups.

According to Dio's account, Claudius' deprivation of the Lycian of his Roman citizenship for not understanding Latin comes right after the rebellion of the Lycians. While both Dio and Suetonius say the revolt resulted in a loss of freedom for the Lycians (Cass. Dio 60.17.3; Suet. *Claud.* 25.3), only Dio mentions Claudius' disdain for the envoy's language habits. As was the case with Tiberius, Dio's complaint about Claudius seems to be his inconsistency. We have just learned in Book 60.8.2–3 (almost immediately prior to the incident with the Lycian envoy) that Claudius took a different approach with Agrippa of Palestine, who helped Claudius become emperor, and his brother Herod: The emperor had bestowed honors on both and allowed them to come to the Senate and thank him in Greek.[47] Immediately after telling the story of the Lycian envoy, Dio points out that this incident is only one example of how indiscriminately (ἀνέδην) the emperor took away citizenship from some and bestowed it on others, both individuals and groups.

It seems significant that Suetonius mentions Tiberius' and Claudius' bilingual educations where Dio does not. In the ἐμβλῆμα passage, Suetonius makes note of Tiberius' ready fluency in Greek (*sermone graeco … promptus et facilis*); earlier we hear of the emperor's devotion to both Greek and Latin liberal studies (70.1: *artes liberales utriusque generis studiosissime coluit*). We also learn that Claudius was not only an avid student of Greek, but often asserted his love (*amor*) for the language and its superiority (*praestantia*) and that he spoke Greek in the Senate to Greek-speaking envoys (*Claud.* 42). We must admit that, beyond understanding that Latin and Greek were the only viable languages in the Senate, we possess no real evidence for what Greek senators spoke there; the fact that it was not discussed in the sources suggests it was a non-issue.[48] Dio's querulousness about early emperors who threatened the harmony of

46 Cary translates συχνοὺς δὲ δὴ καὶ ἄλλους **καὶ ἀναξίους** τῆς πολιτείας ἀπήλασε as "a great many other persons *unworthy* of citizenship were also deprived of it", but it seems unlikely (given, for one thing, his comments on the arbitrary nature of Claudius' giving of citizenship) that Dio would agree with Claudius that those who cannot understand Latin are undeserving. I prefer here Van Herwerden's alternative reading for καὶ ἀναξίους, which is cited by Cary: ⟨**ὡς**⟩ **καὶ ἀναξίους** ("on the grounds that they were unworthy").

47 Kaimio 1979, 107.

48 Kaimio 1979, 108.

the two languages in the Senate suggests, at the very least, that Dio maintains some self-consciousness as a Greek speaker in the halls of Roman power.

5 Conclusion

There is one final figure whose Greek-language learning should be discussed: Hannibal. Dio's treatment of this figure seems to offer the best proof positive of the esteem in which Dio held the Greek language. Dio saw Hannibal as Rome's perfect enemy, who inspired the Romans to a level of civic harmony that had been seen neither before nor since.[49] In this fragmentary description of Hannibal's many excellent qualities,[50] Dio cites the Carthaginian's knowledge of Greek as part of an entire complex of mental capacities that are matched by physical ones (Cass Dio 13.54.2–5 [EM/EV]):

> κ ... ωτατος τε γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ ὑπογυωτάτου καὶ διαρκέστατος ἐς τὸ φερεγγυώτατον ἦν: τό τε ἀεὶ παρὸν ἀσφαλῶς διετίθετο καὶ τὸ μέλλον ἰσχυρῶς προενόει, βουλευτής τε τοῦ συνήθους ἱκανώτατος καὶ εἰκαστὴς τοῦ παραδόξου ἀκριβέστατος γενόμενος, ἀφ᾽ ὧν τό τε ἤδη προσπῖπτόν οἱ ἑτοιμότατα καὶ δι᾽ ἐλαχίστου καθίστατο, καὶ τὸ μέλλον ἐκ πολλοῦ τοῖς λογισμοῖς προλαμβάνων ὡς καὶ παρὸν διεσκόπει. κἀκ τούτου καὶ τοῖς καιροῖς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀνθρώπων καὶ τοὺς λόγους καὶ τὰς πράξεις ἐφήρμοζεν, ἅτε καὶ ἐν τῷ ὁμοίῳ τό τε ὑπάρχον καὶ τὸ ἐλπιζόμενον ποιούμενος. **ἐδύνατο δὲ ταῦθ᾽ οὕτω πράττειν, ὅτι πρὸς τῇ τῆς φύσεως ἀρετῇ καὶ παιδείᾳ πολλῇ μὲν Φοινικικῇ κατὰ τὸ πάτριον πολλῇ δὲ καὶ Ἑλληνικῇ ἤσκητο, καὶ προσέτι καὶ μαντικὴν τὴν διὰ σπλάγχνων ἠπίστατο. τοιοῦτος οὖν δή τις τὴν ψυχὴν γενόμενος ἀντίρροπον καὶ τὸ σῶμα, τὰ μὲν φύσει, τὰ δὲ καὶ διαίτῃ, παρεσκεύαστο, ὥσθ᾽ ὅσα ἐνεχειρίζετο ῥᾳδίως κατεργάζεσθαι.** κοῦφόν τε γὰρ καὶ ἐμβριθὲς ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτὸ εἶχε, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ θεῖν καὶ συνίστασθαι ἱππεύειν τε ἀνὰ κράτος ἀσφαλῶς ἐδύνατο. καὶ οὔτε πλήθει ποτὲ τροφῆς ἐβαρύνετο οὔτε ἐνδείᾳ ἔκαμνεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ἴσῳ καὶ τὸ πλέον καὶ τὸ ἔλαττον,

49 Cass. Dio 13.52.1–2, almost immediately preceding this description, characterizes Rome as full of the classic virtues of daring (τὸ θράσος) and manliness (τὸ ἀνδρεῖον) against the enemy, and good order (ἡ εὐταξία), restraint (τὸ ἐπιεικές), and moderation (μετριότητος) amongst themselves.

50 See Boissevain 1895 *ad loc*. The text combines passages from the *Excerpta Maiana* (*De Sententiis* 133 = Cass. Dio 13.54.2–3: κ ... ωτατος ... ἠπίστατο) and *Excerpta Valesiana* (*De virtutibus* 31). The latter covers Cass. Dio 13.54.4 (τοιοῦτος ... ἐρρώννυτο), but also overlaps with *EM* in Cass. Dio 13.54.3 – which happens to be the precise place in which Hannibal's education is discussed. This double witness allows us to conclude that, most likely, the description is authentically Dio's.

> ὡς καὶ αὔταρκες ἑκάτερον, ἐλάμβανεν. ταῖς τε ταλαιπωρίαις ἰσχυρίζετο, καὶ ταῖς ἀγρυπνίαις ἐρρώννυτο.
>
> [Hannibal] was most resourceful in the most sudden emergency, and most steadfast to the point of utter trustworthiness. Not only did he safely handle the affair of the moment, but he accurately read the future beforehand; he proved himself a most capable counselor in ordinary events and a most accurate judge of the unusual. By these powers, he not only handled the situation immediately confronting him most readily and in the briefest time but also by calculation anticipated the future afar off and considered it as though it were actually present. Consequently, he, above all other men, met each occasion with suitable words and acts, because he viewed the expected and the actual in the same light. *He was able to manage matters thus for the reason that in addition to his natural capacity he was versed in much Phoenician learning common to his country, and likewise in much Greek learning, and furthermore he understood divination by the inspection of entrails. In addition to such mental qualities, he was also equipped with a physique that had been brought to a state of equal perfection, partly by nature and partly by his manner of life, so that he could carry out easily everything that he undertook.* He kept his body agile and at the same time as compact as possible; and he could with safety, therefore, run, or stand his ground, or ride at a furious speed. He never burdened himself with overmuch food, nor suffered through lack of it, but took more or less with equal readiness, feeling that either was satisfactory. Hardship made him rugged, and on the loss of sleep, he grew strong. Possessing these advantages of mind and body, he managed affairs in general as follows.

Dio alludes to a kind of "bilingualism" here, but without reference to Latin: Hannibal's learning is Phoenician and Greek.[51] This may be the most "Plutarchan"

51 It may also be relevant that Latin does not figure here; compare Appian's story that Hannibal had some of his soldiers trick the Romans by speaking their language (App. *Hann.* 177–178): σαλπικτὰς δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ βυκανητάς τινας ἐξ ὀλίγου διαστήματος ἕπεσθαι κελεύσας προσέταξεν, ὅταν ἔνδον γένωνται, τοὺς μὲν θόρυβον πολὺν ἐγείρειν περιθέοντας, ἵνα πολλοὶ δόξωσιν εἶναι, τοὺς δὲ **ῥωμαΐζοντας** βοᾶν, ὅτι Φούλβιος, ὁ Ῥωμαίων στρατηγός, κελεύει τὸ στρατόπεδον ἐκλιπόντας ἐπὶ τὸν ἐγγὺς λόφον ἀναπηδᾶν … τῶν τε **ῥωμαϊζόντων** ἀκούοντες, ὅτι παρήγγελται φεύγειν ἐς τὸν λόφον, περὶ τοῦτ' ἐγίγνοντο ("He also directed a number of trumpeters and horn-blowers to follow at a short distance. When they should be inside the entrenchments some of them were ordered to run around and raise a great tumult so that they might seem to be very numerous, while others, *speaking Latin*, should call out that Fulvius, the Roman general, ordered the evacuation of the camp and the seizure of the

moment in the *Roman History*, in the sense that here a foreigner's knowledge of Greek seems to go hand in hand with a number of other virtues.[52] If Dio gives any clear indication that the praise of bilingualism is actually the praise of Greek-use, it can be found here.

But, again, is it enough for good rule? Hannibal, after all, was defeated by Rome. And as we have seen, knowing Greek does not make one a good emperor. Here again we have a contrast with Plutarch, for whom the possession of (definitionally Hellenic) *paideia* was a *cause* of Roman (i.e., Flamininus') success. We see something similar in another Hellenocentric Greek writer from Plutarch's time: Dio Chrysostom, who in his four orations on kingship tries to persuade Trajan that he can only be a good emperor if he has Greek *paideia*. Cassius Dio, on the other hand, implies that too much intellectual activity can ultimately be detrimental to running the state: Immersing oneself in Greek as well as Latin learning is a good thing on the surface of it, but it does not always result in, or go hand-in-hand with, good policy or good behavior. What is needed is a person with bilingual expertise (an elite Greek deeply steeped in the canon) who views politics from a totally different viewpoint (a senator). As an individual who proudly represents a Roman senatorial perspective in the form of a massive Greek text that calls on long-standing Greek and Roman historiographical traditions, Dio puts himself in the position not only to judge the intellectual qualities of emperors but to show how bilingualism like his own can be correctly marshaled towards good politics. To the degree that Dio calls attention to his bilingual knowledge as a Greek senator writing in Greek, he may be making a double, or even triple, statement about the kind of authority he has: as a senator in an imperial system increasingly hostile to his kind; as a Greek provincial senator; and as a Greco-Roman intellectual.

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neighboring hill.... Hearing orders *given in Latin* directing them to take refuge on the hill, they hurried in that direction." Trans. White). It is for the same reason, perhaps, that Dio does not mention Severus' knowledge of Punic from his upbringing in Lepcis Magna. The word ῥωμαϊζω appears relatively rarely (and only in imperial Greek) before the Byzantine period and usually describes the act of politically favoring Rome rather than speaking in Roman style. It appears in Philostratus (once), Cassius Dio (three times), Josephus (once), Appian (ten times), and Dio Chrysostom (once), and only four times in reference to Latin: in Philostratus, *VA* 5.36, where Apollonius advises Vespasian that Greek-speakers (ἑλληνίζοντας) should rule over Greeks, and "Roman-speakers" (ῥωμαΐζοντας) should rule over people with a similar or the same language (ὁμογλώττων καὶ ξυμφώνων); once in Cassius Dio (in reference to parts of Africa that were conquered by Augustus, 50.6.4); and twice in a single passage of Appian (also in reference to Hannibal tricking the Romans, *Hann.* 177–179).

52 Swain 1990; Xenophontos 2016, 155.

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CHAPTER 17

Cassius Dio's Asia Minor: Biography and Historiography

Christina T. Kuhn

In his seminal work on Cassius Dio, Fergus Millar succinctly remarks that Dio's "background is of especial complexity and interest simply because he was a Greek and a Roman consul, a member of two societies and the heir of two very different social traditions."[1] It is Dio's Greek side on which this analysis is focused. It will illuminate the political, social, and cultural environment in which Dio, a Greek senator from Bithynia, was socialized, and investigate how far that socialization left its mark on his *Roman History*. While Dio's Greek origin and identity, as reflected in his rhetoric, political thought, and literary style, have attracted much scholarly attention in recent decades,[2] the main interest of this analysis lies with two under-studied aspects of his Hellenic background: on the one hand, the extent to which he was familiar with the provinces of Asia Minor; and, on the other, the historiographical function which the many scattered references to this region have in his *Roman History*. Numerous snippets on the history, geography, and culture of Asia Minor are woven into his account; they warrant further consideration, not least because it has been argued that Dio does not reveal the same interest in the Western Latin provinces throughout his *Roman History*.[3] Accordingly, the structure of this article is two-fold. First, I will provide an overview of Dio's points of contact with Asia Minor from his early years to his retirement. Based on an overview of the stages

1 Millar 1964, 7. I would like to thank the Editors (Adam Kemezis, Colin Bailey, and Beatrice Poletti), Marcus Chin, and the anonymous readers for their invaluable comments and suggestions. The Greek text and the English translations of Cassius Dio's *Roman History* are quoted from the Loeb Classical Library edition, Harvard 1914–1927 (translation by Earnest Cary and Herbert B. Foster). References follow the book divisions by U.P. Boissevain; traditional book divisions are given in square brackets when they differ from those of Boissevain.

2 See, e.g., Ameling 1984 and 1997; Aalders 1986; Swain 1996, 401–408; Fomin 2016; Jones 2016; Madsen 2020, 3–7; Asirvatham in this volume.

3 See Millar 1964, 181, who stresses that "apart from Britain, where there was fighting during his lifetime, no features of these provinces, over and above some details of geography or nomenclature, are discussed at all." On the different types of geographical references in Dio's work, see Bertrand 2016. For other recent studies exploring geographical aspects in Dio, see Bertrand 2015 and 2020; Coltelloni-Trannoy 2018; Gowing 2016.

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of his political career I shall discuss the places and regions of Asia Minor he is likely to have experienced first-hand and explore the historical situation he will have witnessed there.[4] Second, I shall investigate how exactly and for what reason Dio weaves information on Asia Minor into his *Roman History*. What significance do these references and excursuses have within the historical narrative of his *Roman History*? What light do they shed on Dio's compositional techniques and narratological strategies?

1 Cassius Dio and Asia Minor

It is generally believed that Nicaea, a *polis* in the Roman province of Pontus-Bithynia,[5] played a special role in Dio's life. Since Dio repeatedly refers to this place as his *patris*, it has been suggested that he was born in Nicaea (*c.*164/165 CE) and spent part of his childhood there.[6] The 160s CE were doubtless troublesome years for the inhabitants of the region. In 162 CE, under Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, Rome had started a war against the Parthians in order to drive them out of Armenia and Syria, which they had invaded under Vologaeses IV.[7] The war on the Eastern frontier soon took its toll on the cities of Asia Minor. The movement of Roman troops between the Danube and the Eastern frontier severely affected civic life in the East. Requisitions, inflation, famine, and pestilence were bitter realities with which the provincials had to cope in those years. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent Dio's family, the Cassii, were directly affected by these events. The Cassii, whose stemma can be traced back to the 1st century CE, enjoyed a high standing in their hometown,

4 Ameling 1984 has done a useful analysis for Bithynia. However, he does not consider Dio's familiarity with many other places of Asia Minor.

5 On the different versions of the name of this province, see Wesch-Klein 2001.

6 On Dio's life, see esp. Millar 1964, 5–27; Barnes 1984, 241–245; Rich 1990, 1–4; Murison 1999, 5–8; Swan 2004, 1–3; Molin 2016; Letta 2019; Madsen 2020, 1–9. References to his *patris*: Cass. Dio 76[75].15.3; 80[79].5.2. Birley 1971, 7, n. 1 held that Dio was born in Rome; in the 2nd edition of his book (1989), however, he gave up this idea. Hose 1994, 359 has picked up on this point again. However, it seems to me unlikely that Dio would have called Nicaea his *patris* if he had been born in Rome. Dio's year of birth is not securely attested. It has been calculated on the basis of Dio's appointment to the praetorship by Pertinax in 193 CE (cf. Cass. Dio 73[72].12.2) for the following year 194 CE (see, however, Barnes 1984, 195, who dates it to 195 CE). Some scholars date Dio's year of birth as early as 162/3 CE (see, e.g., Molin 2016, 438; Millar 1964, 13). For an analysis of Dio's full name, see especially Gowing 1990 and Molin 2016, 431–434.

7 For the situation in Asia Minor under the Antonines, see esp. Magie 1950, 660–664; Marek 2016, 350–352.

Nicaea.[8] Dio's father, (M.?) Cassius Apronianus, was one of those few Bithynian notables who succeeded in climbing the senatorial ladder to reach the consulship.[9] As members of the local elite, the Cassii must have owned considerable property in Nicaea and its countryside. Unfortunately, Dio's exact whereabouts in the years of his boyhood cannot be determined with certainty. Early contacts between Dio and Rome are possible. As Roman senators were required to have property in Italy,[10] it is likely that Dio's father relocated, possibly with his family, to Italy in the 160s or 170s CE.[11] Furthermore, when Dio's father took on the governorship of Lycia and Pamphylia in 179/180 CE,[12] it is possible that his family accompanied him to this southern part of Asia Minor. It is likewise conceivable that the young Dio spent time and was educated in other parts of Asia Minor during these years. Ameling has suggested that Dio may well have spent some time in one of the centres of sophistic education in Asia Minor, such as Smyrna or Ephesus.[13] Certainly, one can only speculate about these early stages of Dio's life, but in light of his father's senatorial career and his own educational background, the idea of a regionally mobile Dio must seriously be entertained.[14]

By about 180 CE at the latest, Dio seems to have settled in Italy, where he was to spend most of his political career. It was presumably through his father that Dio's aspirations of pursuing a senatorial career were first aroused. In the following decades, we see him advance steadily through the senatorial *cursus honorum*: he became quaestor (*c.*189/190), tribune (*c.*191), praetor (194), and suffect consul (*c.*205/206).[15] He also served on the emperor's *consilium* (from *c.*204) and later became proconsul of Africa (223/224) and *legatus Augusti* of

8 On the family of the Cassii, see Millar 1964, 8–10; Barnes 1984, 241–242; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 109–114; Molin 2016, 434–437; Corsten 2016; Madsen 2020, 3–7.

9 Cassius Apronianus: *PIR*² C 485; *RE* III.2 (Stuttgart 1899) cols. 1681–1682, *s.v.* Cassius no. 27 (Groag); Halfmann 1979, 194 no. 123; Molin 2016, 435–437. On Bithynians in the imperial service, see Ameling 1984, 124 n. 17; Halfmann 1982, 637. Barnes 1984, 242 dates Apronianus' consulship to "early in the reign of Commodus"; see also Halfmann 1979, 194, who suggests *c.*183/4 CE.

10 Plin. *Ep.* 6.19, with Millar 1964, 10–11.

11 See Murison 1999, 6.

12 Halfmann 1979, 194 no. 123.

13 See Ameling 1984, 127. On the main centres of the Second Sophistic, cf. Marek 2016, 493.

14 Cf. Birley 1971, 7, n.1; Hose 1994, 359; Kemezis 2014, 17.

15 Cass. Dio 74[73].12.2; 77[76].16.4. For the reconstruction of the dates of Dio's career I follow here Swan 2004, 1–3. For the debate about the date of Dio's first consulship, see esp. Millar 1964, 204–207 (appendix 2); Barnes 1984, 243, and, most recently, Letta 2019, 164–165 (*cos. suff.* in 222 CE).

Dalmatia (224/225) and of Pannonia Superior (225 or later).[16] At the apex of his career, he was appointed consul for a second time (229), enjoying the honour of holding this position alongside the emperor Severus Alexander as his colleague.[17] But despite the fact that for most of his adult life Dio stayed in Rome or nearby Capua,[18] we should not forget that throughout his career he always maintained bonds with Asia Minor. How strong and emotional were these links? Which cities did Dio get to know first-hand, and what civic events and local developments did he witness there? It is these issues that I will examine in more detail in the following pages.

It is noteworthy that in the early 180s CE Dio was already given the opportunity of returning to Asia Minor. His father had been appointed governor of Cilicia, and Dio accompanied him, presumably as part of his father's *cohors amicorum*.[19] The time spent in Cilicia must have been a kind of apprenticeship for him. It will have allowed him to learn about the daily business of a governor and to make himself familiar with the history and geography of a strategically important province in Asia Minor. From Tarsus, the capital of the province of Cilicia, Dio will have accompanied his father to the cities of the assize circuit, where his father was supposed to hold court sessions. Unfortunately, we do not know how far eastwards Dio travelled on this occasion. The main road system to the East linked the cities of Tarsus, Adana, Mallus, Aigaiae, and Issus and led through the "Cilician Gates" down to Syrian Antioch. If Dio had passed through the gates himself, one can easily imagine that he must have been motivated to write about them later.[20] It is also noteworthy that from Tarsus it was only a few days' journey across the Taurus Mountains to the Anatolian plateau. As we shall see, Comana in Cappadocia is given a longer excursus in Dio's work.[21] He clearly shows a special interest in the city's history and geography, which, however, is not to say that he had visited the place himself on that occasion; he may have read or heard about it.[22]

Unfortunately, we do not know the exact dates of his father's governorship of Cilicia. Most likely, both father and son had returned to Rome by 183 CE. As

16 Cass. Dio 80[79].1.2–3. As regards the dates given in brackets here for Dio's governorship in the 220s CE, cf. Swan 2004, 1–3. Note, however, the revised dates proposed by Molin 2016, 443 and Letta 2019.

17 Cass. Dio 80[79].5.1.

18 Dio tells us that he spent much of his free time in his villa at Capua (Cass. Dio 77[76].2.1). Gowing 2016, 133 suggests that Dio did not particularly like Rome.

19 Cass. Dio 69.1.3; 73[72].7.2. On Dio's stay in Cilicia, see also Barnes 1984, 242 and Millar 1964, 14–15.

20 Cass. Dio 48.41; 75[74].7.

21 Cass. Dio 36.11.

22 See Millar 1964, 181, who doubts that Dio actually visited Comana.

it appears, however, Dio did not have to wait long for a return to Asia Minor, for Millar has argued that his first senatorial position may have been a quaestorship in the province of Asia in 189 CE.[23] If this is correct, Dio will have stayed at Ephesus, the capital of the province of Asia, and visited the other *poleis* which formed part of the governor's circuit at that time.[24] It has been suggested that it was also on this occasion that Dio visited Phrygian Hierapolis, of whose natural wonder Dio presents an eyewitness account, which is preserved in Xiphilinus' *Epitome*.[25] As far as the general state of affairs in the province of Asia under Commodus is concerned, we must realize that the destruction caused by the severe earthquake that had struck the cities of the western coast a decade previously, in 178 CE, must still have been visible in the urban landscape.[26] But Dio will also have witnessed the fruits of the many building works that were sponsored by the emperor in this decade.[27] Gratitude for the emperor's assistance will have been a dominant feeling among the provincials at that time, but, doubtless, fear of imperial rule was also a reality in the political situation in the province. Some high-ranking Romans, who were on inimical terms with Commodus, could not escape the emperor's malignancy and were executed.[28]

Although the evidence for Dio staying in Asia Minor in the 190s CE is extremely thin, it has been proposed that he may have held a praetorian governorship in the late 190s CE, possibly in Lycia-Pamphylia.[29] Yet, recent studies have called this appointment into question.[30] Letta has argued for an abrupt break in Dio's career after his praetorship in 194 CE and has rejected the idea that Dio served as governor in these years.[31] Moreover, as we shall see, even though Dio shows some interest in the administrative history of this province

23 Millar 1964, 15.

24 For a reconstruction of the assize districts of the province of Asia, see esp. Mitchell 1999, 22–29; Dalla Rosa 2012; Marek 2016, 260–261. Dalla Rosa 2012, 270 assumes that the governor of Asia spent about three months in Phrygia, two months in the southern region of the province and about four months in the northern part.

25 Cf. Cass. Dio 68.27.3, with Millar 1964, 15. However, as the governors of Cilicia also passed through Asia on their way to their province, it is likewise possible that Dio had visited the site when he accompanied his father to Cilicia almost a decade earlier.

26 According to Aelius Aristides' emotional appeal to the emperor Marcus Aurelius concerning Smyrna (*Or.* 18), the cities of Asia were a pathetic sight at that time.

27 See Magie 1950, 668; Burrell 2004, 48; Winter 1996, 102–103.

28 *HA*, *Comm.* 7.

29 Millar 1964, 17 suggested a governorship somewhere in the East, while Rémy 1986, 246, 299, proposed Lycia and Pamphylia. The only piece of evidence for this governorship is *Dig.* 50.12.7 (a rescript of the emperor Septimius Severus addressed to a proconsul called Dio).

30 See Molin 2016, 439 and Letta 2019, 166.

31 See Letta 2019, 166.

in his *Roman History*, his work does not reveal any greater personal interest in or familiarity with the geography of this region. The assumption of Dio's stay in Lycia-Pamphylia in the late 190s CE must, therefore, be treated with caution.

The question naturally arises of whether Dio may have visited Asia Minor as a private person in the 190s CE. We should not forget that Asia Minor was shaken by the civil war between Septimius Severus and Pescennius Niger in these years.[32] The latter had been proclaimed emperor by the troops in Syria in 193 CE, and it was the province of Bithynia that recognized Pescennius Niger as emperor. Dio's hometown, Nicaea, soon found itself amidst the conflict. In 194 CE, the nearby Lake Ascania became the site of the battle between the armies of Pescennius Niger and Septimius Severus.[33] We do not know whether the Cassii played any role in this struggle for imperial power that took place right on their doorstep. What we know for sure, however, is that the city took the wrong side in this conflict.[34] It supported Pescennius Niger and also stayed loyal to him when other Bithynian cities, like Nicomedia, defected to Septimius Severus – a decision for which Nicaea was later punished by the winner of the war: She was deprived of all her titles and privileges, for which she had long competed with Nicomedia.[35] Against this background, Dio must have felt that there were good reasons for keeping away from these military conflicts in his *patris* in the 190s CE. As long as the balance of power was uncertain, it was wiser to remain in Rome and await the outcome of the civil war. Once Nicaea found herself on the losing side, it was not desirable for a Roman senator to be associated with this place too closely.

It is, indeed, not until 214/215 CE that we hear of Dio's return to his *patris* under Caracalla[36]: On his way to Syria, the emperor set up the winter camp at Nicomedia, the neighbouring city of Dio's hometown, where he made preparations for his war against the Parthians.[37] It was at Nicomedia where Dio joined the emperor's court.[38] He must have presented himself as the perfect local guide for Caracalla. But he may also have hoped to improve imperial relations with his native city. We do not know whether Dio was successful;

32 On the situation of the cities during the civil war, cf. Marek 2016, 352–354; Thiel 2005. For Dio and the civil war of the 190s CE, see Kemezis 2020.

33 Cass. Dio 75[74].6; Hdn. 3.2; *HA*, *Sev.* 8.6–17.; *HA*, *Pesc. Nig*. 5.2–8.

34 For a re-assessment of the chronology of this conflict, see Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 147–155.

35 On the inter-city rivalry for primacy (*proteia*) between Nicaea and Nicomedia, see esp. Robert 1977; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 47–48; Heller 2006.

36 On the date of this stay, see Scott 2018, 1, n. 3.

37 Cass. Dio 78[77].17.3–18.4; 79[78].8.4–5.

38 See Millar 1964, 20–22; Ameling 1984, 127–138.

he seems to have returned to Rome shortly after.[39] What we know for certain, however, is that at some point in 217/218 CE,[40] the new emperor Macrinus sent Dio on an official mission to Pergamum and Smyrna.[41] The exact nature of Dio's position and function remains unclear; Dio merely states that he "was in charge of" (ἐπεστάτησα) these two cities.[42] The background to his mission seems to have been the conflict over civic privileges between the emperor Macrinus and the Pergamenes.[43] But other problems in the province of Asia may also have required Rome's close attention: The Parthian war had caused economic troubles in the region and the long-standing rivalry over primacy between Pergamum, Smyrna, and Ephesus continued to rage fiercely.[44] Dio was presumably already present in Asia when the struggle between Macrinus and Elagabalus for imperial power reached its peak in mid-218 CE.[45] When Macrinus realized that he was increasingly losing the loyalty of his troops, he fled from Syrian Antioch to Byzantium. In his *Roman History*, Dio records the details of the emperor's getaway route.[46] He also refers to the winter camp, which Elagabalus occupied at Nicomedia shortly after Macrinus' capture and death, and an attempted rebellion at Cyzicus.[47] The fact that Dio learned about some details of this rebellion "by an accurate investigation at Pergamum" (80.7.4: αὐτὸς ἐγγύθεν ἐκ τῆς Περγάμου ἀκριβώσας) suggests that he did not just deal with local civic quibbles. Remarkably, this stay in Asia was the last occasion for him to visit Asia Minor in an official function in the imperial service. Dio tells us that he concluded his mission with a journey from Asia to Bithynia,

39 See Millar 1964, 22.

40 Different dates have been proposed for Dio's mission: e.g., Millar 1964, 194 (218–222); Swan 2004, 3 ("218–221?"); Guerber 2004, 322 (start date: "après avril 217 mais avant la défaite de Macrin devant Antioche le 8 juin 218"; "une période longue, au moins trois années"); Molin 2016, 441 (start date: between 16 May 218 and 8 June 218; until June 221); Letta 2019, 169 ("c. 217–219").

41 Cass. Dio 80[79].7.4. On Dio's mission to Pergamum and Smyrna, see esp. Millar 1964, 23; Guerber 2004; Letta 2019, 167–168.

42 Guerber 2004, 326 has suggested that Dio served in the double capacity of *curator* and *corrector*. This has been rejected by Letta 2019, 167–168, who argues that Dio only served as *curator*. On the offices of *curator* and *corrector*, see Burton 1979; Guerber 1997 and 2017.

43 Cf. Cass. Dio 79[78].20.4. On the origins of this conflict under Macrinus: Cadoux 1938, 293; Guerber 2004, 326–329; Burrell 2004, 51; Davenport 2012, 193–194; Scott 2018, 68.

44 Burrell 2004, 48–53; 70–76.

45 On this struggle for power, see Potter 2004, 146–153.

46 Cass. Dio 79[78].39, with Scott 2018, 98–99. On Macrinus' flight, see also Hdn. 5.4.7–12. For a discussion of what Macrinus' route reveals about his relationship with the governors of Cappadocia and Pontus-Bithynia, see Davenport 2012, 190.

47 Cass. Dio 80[79].7.3.

where he fell ill.[48] Depending on the mode of travel, such a journey will have taken about one or two weeks.[49] We do not know the exact reason for his travels to Bithynia, but a private visit to his family and friends in Nicaea is most likely. It was presumably in his hometown where he recovered from his illness before finally returning to Rome. Prestigious governorships in the western provinces and a second consulship followed in the 220s CE. But Nicaea never lost her attraction for him. Indeed, it was in *c.*229 CE that Dio headed back to Bithynia to spend, as he writes, "all the rest of my life in my native land" (80.5.2: πάντα τὸν λοιπὸν τοῦ βίου χρόνον ἐν τῇ πατρίδι ζῆσαι).[50] Like some other Greeks who had pursued a senatorial or equestrian *cursus*, Dio left Rome and returned to the land and city of his roots after a long and distinguished career in the Roman imperial service.[51] It was in Bithynia where the power base of the Cassii was. An inscription discovered in Nicomedia nicely illustrates this point: Even in late antiquity, a member of the Cassii could still proudly state that he descended from the "famous Cassii" (τῶν περικλεῶν Καssίων).[52]

2 The Presentation of Asia Minor in Cassius Dio's *Roman History*

We have seen that Dio maintained important ties with Asia Minor throughout his career as a senator, even though Rome became the focal point of his adult life. Despite the fact that he was not awarded the accolade of holding the proconsulship of Asia, the governorships of his father and his own appointments in the imperial service brought him back to his homeland several times, let alone the personal visits he may have paid to Bithynia and other parts of Asia Minor. His attested stays in the provinces of Asia, Pontus-Bithynia, and Cilicia will have allowed Dio to acquire special expert knowledge of the administrative history and geography of these provinces. They may also have intensified his interest in, and personal bonds to, these parts of the Roman Empire. Against this background, it should not be a surprise that the provincial world of imperial Asia Minor has left its mark on Dio's *Roman History* in the form of many scattered comments, brief notes, and short digressions, which Dio

48 Cass. Dio 80[80].1.2.

49 The length of travel depended on a variety of factors such as the route, season, or mode of travel. For a useful calculation tool, see the "ORBIS: Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World": http://orbis.stanford.edu/.

50 See also Scott 2018, 152.

51 For the phenomenon of Greeks who remained attached to their *patris*, see Salmeri 2000, 59–63.

52 *TAM* IV.1 no. 368, with Corsten 2016.

has woven into the narrative. From a historiographical point of view, it is of particular interest to examine which issues Dio selects for inclusion and what function these pieces of information fulfil in the narrative.

The establishment of Roman rule in Asia Minor was a gradual process, beginning in the second half of the 2nd century BCE with the formation of the province of Asia after the death of Attalus III.[53] In his *Roman History*, Dio reveals a particular interest in the administrative and territorial arrangements which the Roman government made during the imperial period. We learn, for instance, that under Augustus Galatia and Lycaonia fell to the Romans after King Amyntas' death in 25 BCE and were henceforth administered by a Roman governor, while "the portions of Pamphylia formerly assigned to Amyntas were restored to their own district" (53.26: τά τε χωρία τὰ ἐκ τῆς Παμφυλίας πρότερον τῷ Ἀμύντᾳ προσνεμηθέντα τῷ ἰδίῳ νομῷ ἀπεδόθη).[54] Dio weaves these concise pieces of territorial and administrative information into his account of Augustus' foreign policy, military actions, and honours. Similar details are provided on the establishment of Roman rule in Cappadocia under Tiberius, which was put in charge of an equestrian,[55] and in Lycia under Claudius, which the emperor added to the prefecture of Pamphylia.[56] Brief but precise details like these reveal Dio's profound knowledge of the history of the provincial administration of this region and are a distinct feature of his historiography. This also comes to light in his comments on the different realms of influence that emerged after the "first settlement" between Augustus and the Senate in 27 BCE, when the provinces of the Roman Empire were divided into so-called "imperial provinces" under the control of the emperor and "public provinces" under the control of the Senate and the People.[57] In Book 53 Dio provides a longer, detailed account of this settlement.[58] In addition, he touches upon the later changes in this system with a special focus on Asia Minor. Thus he points out that under Hadrian Pamphylia was changed from an "imperial" to a "public" province, while Bithynia was made an "imperial province" under a *legatus Augusti pro praetore*.[59] Elsewhere Dio selects for a special comment Augustus' visit to the provinces of Asia and Bithynia, where the emperor initiated reforms and made benefactions regardless of the fact that these were

53 On the history of Asia Minor under Roman rule see, above all, Magie 1950; Mitchell 1993; Dmitriev 2005a; 2005b; Marek 2016.

54 Cf. also Rémy 1986, 30–33.

55 Cass. Dio 57.17.7, with Rémy 1986, 34–37.

56 Cass. Dio 60.17.3.

57 Strabo 17.3.25 [840 C], with Millar 1989 on the terminology.

58 Cass. Dio 53.13–15.

59 Cass. Dio 69.14.

"public" provinces, as Dio explicitly remarks.[60] The intention of this statement is obvious: Dio employs it to present Augustus' all-encompassing generosity and care for the provincials as a distinct character trait of the emperor, which deserves particular mention: "He did not … neglect them [the provincials in public provinces], but gave most careful attention to them all, as if they were his own" (54.7.5: οὐχ ὅτι τοῦ δήμου καὶ ταῦτα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ τὰ πρότερα ἐδόκει εἶναι ἐν ὀλιγωρίᾳ αὐτὰ ποιησάμενος, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάνυ πάντων σφῶν ὡς καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ὄντων ἐπιμεληθείς). His interest in highlighting the merits of a Roman emperor also manifests itself in his account of the complex territorial arrangements which Claudius made with the Eastern client kings (Cass. Dio 60.8.1–2):

> καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο τῷ τε Ἀντιόχῳ τὴν Κομμαγηνὴν ἀπέδωκεν (ὁ γὰρ Γάιος, καίπερ αὐτός οἱ δοὺς αὐτήν, ἀφῄρητο), καὶ τὸν Μιθριδάτην τὸν Ἴβηρα, ὃν ὁ Γάιος μεταπεμψάμενος ἐδεδέκει, οἴκαδε πρὸς ἀνάληψιν τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀπέπεμψεν. ἄλλῳ τέ τινι Μιθριδάτῃ, τὸ γένος ἀπ᾽ ἐκείνου τοῦ πάνυ ἔχοντι, τὸν Βόσπορον ἐχαρίσατο, καὶ τῷ Πολέμωνι χώραν τινὰ ἀντ᾽ αὐτοῦ Κιλικίας ἀντέδωκε.
>
> Next he restored Commagene to Antiochus, since Gaius, though he had himself given him the district, had taken it away again; and Mithridates the Iberian, whom Gaius had summoned and imprisoned, was sent home again to resume his throne. To another Mithridates, a lineal descendant of Mithridates the Great, he granted Bosporus, giving to Polemon some land in Cilicia in place of it.

When Dio goes on to note that "the acts I have named, now, were the acts of Claudius himself, and they were praised by everybody" (60.8.4: Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν αὐτοῦ τε τοῦ Κλαυδίου ἔργα ἦν καὶ ὑφ᾽ ἁπάντων ἐπῃνεῖτο), it becomes clear that he broaches these territorial changes to present a more differentiated view of Claudius' character and leadership. Based on his knowledge of the East, he nuances the commonly held opinion of Claudius as an emperor whose decision-making was said to be controlled by his freedmen and wives.[61] In contrast to this disparaging view, he underlines that the emperor was, no doubt, able to pass legislation which he initiated himself and which – this is the main point of his remark – received much praise for it from contemporaries.

As regards the characterization of emperors through their policies towards Asia Minor, Dio often notes their commitment on the occasion of the numerous

60 Cass. Dio 54.7.

61 See, e.g., Suet. *Claud.* 25, 28–29.

earthquakes in the region.[62] Thus, he reports on the disaster which befell the province of Asia under Augustus to extol the emperor's munificence, since he "paid into the public treasury from his private funds the amount of its annual tribute" (54.30.3: τόν τε φόρον αὐτῆς τὸν ἔτειον ἐκ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ χρημάτων τῷ κοινῷ ἐσήνεγκε). Likewise, according to Dio, Tiberius' reaction after the earthquake that struck thirteen cities of Asia Minor in 17 CE sheds light on the emperor's exemplary magnanimity and modesty, for he "contributed vast sums both to cities and to private individuals, and would not accept any honour or praise for these acts" (57.17.8: πάμπολλα ἔς τε τὰς πόλεις καὶ τοὺς ἰδιώτας ἀνήλισκε, καὶ οὔτε τιμὴν οὔτε ἔπαινον οὐδένα ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς προσεδέχετο). A further example is that of Marcus Aurelius' laudable generosity towards Smyrna after the devastating earthquake in 178 CE. In light of this imperial support, the negative historical and current assessment of the emperor was incomprehensible to Dio: "Therefore I am surprised to hear people even today censuring him on the ground that he was not an open-handed prince" (72[71].32.3: ἀφ᾽ οὗπερ καὶ νῦν θαυμάζω τῶν αἰτιωμένων αὐτὸν ὡς οὐ μεγαλόφρονα γενόμενον). It is noteworthy that with this indirect characterization of the emperors Dio follows in the footsteps of Roman historians such as Suetonius and Tacitus, who also occasionally refer to natural disasters in Asia Minor to praise imperial *liberalitas*.[63] Indeed, it is fair to say that Dio is more interested in what light these earthquakes shed on the characters of Roman emperors than the actual destruction of the *poleis* and the consequences for the provincials. This reveals a Roman rather than Greek provincial perspective.

On the other hand, Dio does not hesitate to use his knowledge of Asia Minor to make critical remarks about individual emperors. Remarkably, when he does so, it is usually in the context of the spread of Roman culture in the East. There is indeed rich evidence relating to the "Romanization" of the local elites of Asia Minor in the imperial period: Many provincials displayed their loyalty to Rome by adopting Roman citizenship and nomenclature, participating in the imperial cult, and pursuing careers in the imperial service.[64] This is not to say that there were no voices critical of Roman rule in Asia Minor. They are illuminating in so far as they record a certain disappointment with the lack of freedom and autonomy of the *poleis* under Roman sovereignty.[65] Against this background, the way Dio deals with the Lycian civil unrest under Claudius is

62 On a study of imperial help after severe earthquakes in Asia Minor, see Winter 1996, 94–108.

63 See Winter 1996, 96–97.

64 On the "Romanization" of the Greek elites in the East, see Madsen 2009.

65 No example better encapsulates this feeling than Plutarch's famous statement in his *Precepts of Statecraft* (Plut. *Mor*. 813E).

particularly remarkable.[66] It is most telling that he does not investigate the causes of this provincial unrest, which may have revealed the extent of the Lycians' dissatisfaction with imperial rule. He rather seems to abstain from digging more deeply into provincial affairs and unearthing provincial discontent. Instead, his attention is focussed on a Lycian envoy, who had been granted Roman citizenship but was unable to communicate in Latin when the affair was raised in the Roman Senate. Dio reports that, in reaction, Claudius "took away his citizenship, saying that it was not proper for a man to be a Roman who had no knowledge of the Romans' language" (60.17.4: τὴν πολιτείαν ἀφείλετο, εἰπὼν μὴ δεῖν Ῥωμαῖον εἶναι τὸν μὴ καὶ τὴν διάλεξίν σφων ἐπιστάμενον).[67] Dio uses this Lycian episode (which paradigmatically reveals the lack of integration of a Greek provincial) to launch a more general attack on Claudius' policy of the liberal award of Roman citizenship. He criticizes the fact that under Claudius Roman citizenship had become a distinction that was available for cheap money.[68] In Dio's view, Roman citizenship was a special privilege that should be reserved for the worthiest members of the local elite only and, most importantly, for those who dedicatedly identified with Rome.[69] In a similar way, Dio alludes to Rome's establishment of the imperial cult in the East to criticize the self-glorification of individual emperors.[70] This is not to say that he entirely disapproved of emperor worship. However, he displays a critical attitude towards pro-active attempts of individual emperors to establish the worship of their own person during their lifetime.[71] Accordingly, in Book 59, he strongly disapproves of Caligula's order to set up the worship of himself at Miletus, adding the biting remark that the emperor had only chosen this place because he "desired to appropriate to his own use the large and exceedingly beautiful temple which the Milesians were building to Apollo" (59.28: τὸν νεὼν ὃν οἱ Μιλήσιοι τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ μέγαν καὶ ὑπερκαλλῆ ἐποίουν ἰδιώσασθαι ἐπεθύμησε). It is Caligula's hubris which Dio castigates through his reference to Miletus.[72] The Milesian episode functions as a prelude to Dio's longer description of Caligula's

66 Cass. Dio 60.17.3. On this unrest in Lycia, see also Suet. *Claud.* 25.3; *SEG* 51.1832; 57.1670; Jones 2001. For the language of enslavement used by Dio in this passage, see Lavan 2013, 133. For the provincialization of Lycia and Pamphylia, see Brandt and Kolb 2005, 20–24.

67 On this episode, see also the discussion by Asirvatham in this volume.

68 On Claudius' policy of awarding citizenship, see Osgood 2011, 161–165.

69 On Dio's discussion of universal citizenship in his *Roman History* (esp. 52.19.3–6; 79.9.5), see Kemezis 2019, 96–102.

70 On the establishment of the imperial cult in Asia Minor, see especially Price 1984; Witulski 2007.

71 For Dio's attitude towards emperor worship, see Madsen 2009, 50–51, 124.

72 For Caligula and Miletus, see Burrell 2004, 55–58; Witulski 2007, 42–45.

conduct in Rome, where the emperor expressed his megalomania by building temples to himself during his lifetime on the Palatine.[73]

It is indeed striking that in his references to Asia Minor Dio hardly ever discusses the topic of local civic politics. One of the rare occasions is a passage in the famous speech which he places in the mouth of Augustus' advisor, Maecenas, in Book 52.[74] With regard to the Greek cities in the East, Dio's Maecenas gives the advice that the People should not be offered the opportunity of meeting in popular assemblies, as they are prone to unrest.[75] He, moreover, recommends (Cass. Dio 52.30.3):

> ἔπειτα δὲ μήτ᾽ οἰκοδομημάτων πλήθεσιν ἢ καὶ μεγέθεσιν ὑπὲρ τἀναγκαῖα χρήσθωσαν, μήτ᾽ ἀγώνων πολλῶν καὶ παντοδαπῶν ἀναλώμασι δαπανάσθωσαν, ἵνα μήτε σπουδαῖς ματαίαις ἐκτρύχωνται μήτε φιλοτιμίαις ἀλόγοις πολεμῶνται.
>
> In the second place, the cities should not indulge in public buildings unnecessarily numerous or large, nor waste their resources on expenditures for a large number and variety of public games, lest they exhaust themselves in futile exertions and be led by unreasonable rivalries to quarrel among themselves.

This statement deals with one of the key problems of civic life in the Greek East in the imperial period: the intense inter-city rivalry for precedence (*proteia*), which often resulted in the over-expenditure of civic resources. This was a competition for honour and glory, a vying for Rome's attention and imperial benefits.[76] Inter-city rivalry developed its own dynamics in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE and still continued in Dio's time. Dio's allusion to this state of affairs suggests that he was fully aware of these undesirable developments in the civic life of the *poleis* of Asia Minor and did not hesitate to denounce them. If Maecenas' speech was composed by Dio after 222 CE, as some scholars

73 Similarly, Dio's excursus on the establishment of the imperial cult in Asia Minor (51.20.6–8) is employed for a comparison with Rome, where "no emperor, however worthy of renown he has been, has dared to do this (οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις τῶν καὶ ἐφ᾽ ὁποσονοῦν λόγου τινὸς ἀξίων ἐτόλμησε τοῦτο ποιῆσαι)." For a critical assessment of this passage, see Madsen 2009, 46–53; Madsen 2016.

74 Cass. Dio 52.14–40. The literature on the Maecenas-Agrippa debate is vast. See, e.g., Hammond 1932; Millar 1964, 102–118; Reinhold 1988, 165–210; Bleicken 1962; Adler 2012; France 2016; Cresci 2016. On the references to the Greek cities in this debate, see Millar 1964, 108–109; Ameling 1984, 133–134.

75 Cass. Dio 52.30.2.

76 On the inter-city rivalry, see esp. Heller 2006.

suggest,[77] we must assume that Maecenas' advice concerning civic politics in the Greek *poleis* was influenced by Dio's own experience in Smyrna and Pergamum,[78] where he had become a witness of this long-standing rivalry. Interestingly, his stance on the matter, as expressed in Maecenas' speech, is reminiscent of that of Dio Chrysostom, who had made passionate appeals for concord among the cities and reprimanded the useless pursuit for imperial favours that weakened the *poleis*.[79] However, Dio's passage condemning the Greek assemblies obviously reflects a Roman rather than Greek perspective; it is clearly Dio, the Roman senator and provincial administrator, who advocates this view.[80]

With this passage in mind, it is also worth asking whether Dio's account makes any references to the Greek cultural movement of the Second Sophistic, which was particularly prominent in the cities of Western Asia Minor in the second century CE.[81] It is noteworthy that Dio does refer to some sophistic figures from Asia Minor in his narrative, even though only in passing. As part of his report on the reign of Hadrian, for instance, he relates the downfall of the sophist Dionysius of Miletus.[82] It is evident that Dio's motivation for including this short episode about this rhetorical star from Asia Minor is to illustrate a peculiar character trait of Hadrian: He was a ruler who "wished to

77 For an overview of the different dates proposed for the composition of this debate, see Reinhold 1988, 180–182; Smyshlyayev 1991; Adler 2012, 478, n. 6.

78 Thus also Reinhold 1988, 203.

79 On Dio Chrysostom and his appeals for concord, see esp. Jones 1978, 83–94; Salmeri 2000. Apparently, Antoninus Pius also pursued a policy of concord (cf. Kuhn 2013). On a potential kinship between Dio Chrysostom and Cassius Dio, as proposed by some scholars, see Ameling 1984, 125–126; Barnes 1984, 242. However, Gowing 1990 has convincingly argued that the name "Cocceianus" was erroneously attributed to Cassius Dio in the Byzantine period, resulting from a confusion with Dio Chrysostom, and that kinship between the two is, therefore, doubtful.

80 Burden-Strevens 2015, 301–302, 304–305 has rightly drawn attention to the fact that Dio communicates his Roman viewpoint through a Greek lens: The speech stands in the tradition of Thucydides and Demosthenes.

81 On the Second Sophistic, see esp. Bowersock 1969; Bowie 1970; Anderson 1993; Swain 1996; Whitmarsh 2000; 2005; Johnson 2017. Unfortunately, our assessment of Dio's personal interest in the Second Sophistic is hampered by the fact that the later books of his *Roman History* are preserved mainly through Byzantine epitomists, who could follow their own agenda, preferences, and programme when copying from Dio's *Roman* History. On Xiphilinus, see Brunt 1980 and Mallan 2013. On Dio and the Second Sophistic, see also Ameling 1984, 126–128.

82 See Cass. Dio 69.3. On Dionysius of Miletus: *PIR*^{2} D 105; Philostr. *VS* 521–6, with Janiszewski *et al.* 2015, 95–96 (no. 282); Puech 2002, 229–232 (nos. 98–99). Other sophists briefly referred to by Dio include Maternus (Cass. Dio 67.12.5) and Favorinus, the Gaul (Cass. Dio 69.3.4).

surpass everybody in everything" and "hated those who attained eminence in any direction" (69.3: βουλόμενος γὰρ πάντων ἐν πᾶσι περιεῖναι ἐμίσει τοὺς ἔν τινι ὑπεραίροντας). The message is clear: Hadrian's ambition did not even spare the great virtuoso sophists among the orators. Remarkably, the sophists' special interest in the Greek classical past, as reflected in their speeches, is of little interest to Dio. Nor does he pay much attention to the nostalgia of the Greek cities or the revival of local myths and histories, which was so characteristic of this period. A rare exception to this is, however, furnished by his critical digression on the city of Comana in Cappadocia (Cass. Dio 36.11):

> τὰ δὲ δὴ Κόμανα τῆς τε νῦν Καππαδοκίας ἐστί, καὶ ἐδόκει τό τε τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος βρέτας τὸ Ταυρικὸν καὶ τὸ γένος τὸ Ἀγαμεμνόνειον δεῦρο ἀεὶ ἔχειν. καὶ ὅπως μὲν ἐς αὐτοὺς ταῦτα ἀφίκετο ἢ ὅπως διέμεινεν, οὐ δύναμαι τὸ σαφὲς πολλῶν λεγομένων εὑρεῖν· ὃ δ' ἀκριβῶς ἐπίσταμαι, φράσω. δύο αὗται πόλεις ἐν τῇ Καππαδοκίᾳ ὁμώνυμοι οὖτε πάνυ πόρρω ἀπ' ἀλλήλων εἰσὶ καὶ τῶν αὐτῶν περιέχονται· καὶ γὰρ μυθολογοῦσι καὶ δεικνύουσι τά τε ἄλλα πάντα ἐκ τοῦ ὁμοίου, καὶ τὸ ξίφος ὡς αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο τὸ τῆς Ἰφιγενείας ὂν ἀμφότεραι ἔχουσι.
>
> Comana belongs to the present district of Cappadocia and was supposed to have possessed clear up to that time the Tauric statue of Artemis and the descendants of Agamemnon. As to how these reached them or how they remained there I cannot discover the truth, since there are various stories; but what I understand clearly, I will state. There are two cities of this same name in Cappadocia, not very far apart, and they covet the same honours; for the stories they tell, and likewise the relics they exhibit, are the same in every case, including the sword, which each possesses, supposed to be that which belonged to Iphigenia. So much for this matter.

Considering Dio's first-hand experience of civic life in Asia Minor, one would have expected a stronger historiographical interest in the local history and foundation stories of Greek cities. In this period, after all, mythical city founders and heroes were more prominently on display than ever before.[83] Their portraits appeared on civic coins, statues were erected to them, and festivals and cults were founded or revived in their honour. It would, therefore, seem that Dio avoided close engagement with what were stories of Greek cultural memory and pride. However, when he exceptionally brings up the topic, as in the case of Comana, he skilfully uses it for his own purposes: It serves to present as an unbiased historian in search of truth, who investigates the evidence (even if it is complex and contradictory) on the basis of his factual knowledge.

83 On this phenomenon, see Weiss 1984; Leschhorn 1984; Scheer 1993; Lindner 1994.

Rather than dealing with the Greek cities' local past, Dio seems to prefer to capture his readers' attention with innocuous tales about the natural marvels and bizarre geographical phenomena of Asia Minor. It is important to remember that paradoxography was still a popular genre in the Roman period, as the works of Isigonus of Nicaea and Phlegon of Tralles demonstrate. Moreover, the case of the first-century senator C. Licinius Mucianus, who recorded a range of bizarre phenomena during his governorships abroad, shows that the Roman ruling elite took an active interest in marvels and the supernatural too.[84] It is against this background that Dio's predilection for the natural marvels of Asia Minor needs to be viewed. So, for instance, in a passage, which has come down to us through Xiphilinus' *Epitome*, he informs us at some length and with great fascination about a vapour ascending from a cavern at Hierapolis in Asia, which, as he stresses, he had experienced himself (Cass. Dio 68.27.3 [Xiph]):

> εἶδον ἐγὼ τοιοῦτον ἕτερον ἐν Ἱεραπόλει τῆς Ἀσίας, καὶ ἐπειράθην αὐτοῦ δι' ὀρνέων, αὐτός τε ὑπερκύψας καὶ αὐτὸς ἰδὼν τὸ πνεῦμα· κατακέκλειταί τε γὰρ ἐν δεξαμενῇ τινι, καὶ θέατρον ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ᾠκοδόμητο, φθείρει τε πάντα τὰ ἔμψυχα πλὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὰ αἰδοῖα ἀποτετμημένων. οὐ μὴν καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν αὐτοῦ συννοῆσαι ἔχω, λέγω δὲ ἅ τε εἶδον ὡς εἶδον καὶ ἃ ἤκουσα ὡς ἤκουσα.
>
> I saw another opening like it at Hierapolis in Asia, and tested it by means of birds; I also bent over it myself and saw the vapor myself. It is enclosed in a sort of cistern and a theatre had been built over it. It destroys all living things save human beings that have been emasculated. The reason for this I cannot understand; I merely relate what I saw as I saw it and what I heard as I heard it.

Dio integrates the recollection of this event into a longer report on Trajan's visit to Babylon, where the emperor saw "a deadly vapour that destroys any terrestrial animal and any winged creature that so much as inhales a breath of it" (68.27.2: καὶ τὸ στόμιον ἐθεάσατο ἐξ οὗ πνεῦμα δεινὸν ἀναδίδοται, ὥστε πᾶν μὲν ἐπίγειον ζῷον πᾶν δὲ πετεινὸν ἀποφθείρειν, εἰ καὶ ἐφ' ὁποσονοῦν ὄσφροιτό τι αὐτοῦ). By adding his own vivid eyewitness account of the vapour at Hierapolis Dio lends special credibility to the Babylonian marvel associated with Trajan, which might otherwise have been dismissed by his readers as a fictitious fantasy story. It is Dio, the historian, who, at Hierapolis, saw with his own eyes

84 The *mirabilia* recorded by Mucianus have come down to us through Pliny's *Natural History*. On Mucianus' work, see Ash 2007 and Williamson 2007 (with an appendix of the texts). For Dio's interest in natural marvels, see Bertrand 2016, 709 and 2020, 126.

a natural phenomenon similar to that at Babylon, and it is he who dared to expose himself to the dangerous fumes to test it. Following the tradition of Herodotus and Pausanias, Dio attempts to establish authority through the claim of autopsy.[85] Moreover, by constructing a parallelism between Trajan's observation and his own experience, Dio places himself, as it were, on a par with the emperor: Both have witnessed an extraordinary natural phenomenon and survived its deadly threat. Like Trajan, Dio, too, is surrounded by an aura of wonder and awe.

The Hierapolis episode, however, is not the only example of an eyewitness testimony related to one of his stays in Asia Minor. When he comes to speak about Sextus Condianus, who tried to escape his execution ordered by Commodus, Dio brings up the story against the background of his own visit to the oracle of Mallus in Cilicia.[86] It is introduced with the following statement: "As for the matter, now, that I have just related, I myself was present and heard it; and I will mention another thing that I saw" (73[72].7.1: τοῦτό τε οὖν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα παρών, καὶ ἕτερον τοιόνδε εἶδον). It was at Mallus that Dio learned that Sextus had received an oracle foretelling the strangling of the prominent Quintilii brothers by order of Commodus (Cass. Dio 73[72].7 [Xiph/EV])[87]:

> ἔστιν ἐν Μαλλῷ πόλει τῆς Κιλικίας Ἀμφιλόχου χρηστήριον, καὶ χρᾷ δι' ὀνειράτων. ἔχρησεν οὖν καὶ τῷ Σέξτῳ, ὃ διὰ γραφῆς ἐκεῖνος ἐδήλωσε· παιδίον γὰρ τῷ πίνακι ἐνεγέγραπτο δύο δράκοντας ἀποπνῖγον καὶ λέων νεβρὸν διώκων. οὐδὲ ἔσχον αὐτὰς συμβαλεῖν, τῷ πατρὶ συνὼν ἄρχοντι τῆς Κιλικίας, πρὶν πυθέσθαι τούς τε ἀδελφοὺς ὑπὸ τοῦ Κομμόδου, ὃς μετὰ ταῦτα τὸν Ἡρακλέα ἐζήλωσε, τρόπον τινὰ πνιγέντας, ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ Ἡρακλῆς ἔτι νήπιος ὢν ἱστόρηται τοὺς ὑπὸ τῆς Ἥρας ἐπιπεμφθέντας αὐτῷ δράκοντας ἀποπνῖξαι (καὶ γὰρ καὶ οἱ Κυιντίλιοι ἀπηγχονήθησαν), καὶ τὸν Σέξτον φεύγοντα καὶ διωκόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος.
>
> There is in the city of Mallus, in Cilicia, an oracle of Amphilochus that gives responses by means of dreams. Now it had given a response also to Sextus, that he had indicated by means of a drawing; the picture which he had put on the tablet represented a boy strangling two serpents and a lion pursuing a fawn. I was with my father, who was governor of Cilicia at the

85 On this strategy, see Marincola 1997, 79–86; Williamson 2007, 240. On other eye-witness accounts in Dio's work, see Bertrand 2016, 706–707; for the Herodotean character of these testimonies, see esp. Kuhn-Chen 2002, 138–139.

86 Cass. Dio 73[72].7.1–2.

87 The brothers are Sex. Quintilius Condianus (*PIR*^{2} Q 21) and Sex. Quintilius Maximus (*PIR*^{2} Q 27). On the Quintilii, see Halfmann 1979, 163 nos. 75–76; Kuhn 2012.

> time and could not comprehend what the figures meant, until I learned that the brothers had been strangled, so to speak, by Commodus (who later emulated Hercules), just as Hercules, when an infant, is related to have strangled the serpents sent against him by Juno (for the Quintilii, too, had been strangled), and until I learned also that Sextus was a fugitive and was being pursued by a more powerful adversary.

The episode itself, as it survives from Xiphilinus and the *Excerpta*, does not contain much information of historical significance but its inclusion is not without purpose. Its main narrative function is to prove Dio's first-hand familiarity with the Sextus case and, more importantly, to captivate his readers with a story of curiosity dealing with prophecy and mysterious, inexplicable circumstances. Dio had seen the drawing, the outcome of divine communication, with his own eyes. It is also noteworthy that this episode sheds interesting light on Dio's selection of material.[88] He later stresses that there were many other victims of Commodus whose stories he could have told, but that he had not included them because he did not want to make his narrative "tedious".[89] Hence it is his personal encounter with the case of Sextus in Cilicia which raised his own interest in the case of the Quintilii brothers and which determined his choice when deciding what to present for a more detailed discussion in his *Roman History*.

Entertaining the reader with bizarre and supernatural stories from Asia Minor also seems to motivate the account which Dio presents at the end of Book 67, where he recalls how the philosopher Apollonius of Tyana announced Domitian's death from a rock at Ephesus at exactly the hour when Domitian was assassinated.[90] This story, which the Ephesians may have told Dio during his stay in the city, forms the climax of his narrative of Domitian's reign. For Dio, it is an anecdote which intends to associate Domitian with the odd and weird. Accordingly, he introduces the episode with the words "it surprises me more than anything else" (67.18.1: ὃ δ' εἶπον ὅτι ὑπὲρ πάντα τἆλλα θαυμάσας ἔχω, τόδ' ἐστίν), thus justifying why he appends the story to the very end of his account of the reign of Domitian. Although he indicates that the coincidence of the events has been proved, he feels the need to emphasize that "this is what actually happened, though one should doubt it ten thousand times over" (67.18.2: τοῦτο μὲν οὕτως ἐγένετο, κἂν μυριάκις τις ἀπιστήσῃ). With this final judgement,

88 On Dio's research for his *Roman History* and the selection of material, see Kuhn-Chen 2002, 137–138.

89 Cass. Dio 73[72].7.3.

90 Cass. Dio 67.18.

Dio casts himself into the role of the reliable historian who explores, examines, and tries to properly assess what, at first sight, seems strange and incredible.

As we have seen, Dio's repertoire of *mirabilia* related to Asia Minor includes accounts about natural wonders, oracles, and prophecy.[91] But the stunning architecture of some places may have offered him a source of inspiration, too, as becomes evident in Book 75, where the text, as it survives from Xiphilinus, sets out to describe in meticulous detail the amazing fortifications of Byzantium. The city was only separated from the northern part of Bithynia by the Bosporus, and it was only a two-day journey for Dio to reach it from Nicaea. According to him, Byzantium's extraordinarily strong walls and chain of towers created the impression of an impregnable bulwark, bringing glory to the inhabitants.[92] Dio embeds the description of this architectural wonder into his account of the siege and capture of Byzantium by Septimius Severus in 196 CE. His report on the demolition of the city walls culminates in the following observations (Cass. Dio 75[74].14.5–6 [Xiph]):

> καὶ εἶδον ἐγὼ τά τε τείχη πεπτωκότα ὥσπερ ὑπ᾽ ἄλλων τινῶν ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἑαλωκότα, ἐτεθεάμην δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ ἑστηκότα καὶ ἠκηκόειν αὐτῶν καὶ λαλούντων. ἑπτὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν Θρᾳκίων πυλῶν πύργοι καθήκοντες πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν ἦσαν, τούτων δ᾽ εἰ μέν τις ἄλλῳ τῳ προσέμιξεν, ἥσυχος ἦν, εἰ δὲ δὴ τῷ πρώτῳ ἐνεβόησέ τινα ἢ καὶ λίθον ἐνέρριψεν, αὐτός τε ἤχει καὶ ἐλάλει καὶ τῷ δευτέρῳ τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ποιεῖν παρεδίδου, καὶ οὕτω διὰ πάντων ὁμοίως ἐχώρει, οὐδὲ ἐπετάραττον ἀλλήλους, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τῷ μέρει πάντες, παρὰ τοῦ πρὸ αὐτοῦ ὁ ἕτερος, τήν τε ἠχὴν καὶ τὴν φωνὴν διεδέχοντό τε καὶ παρεπέμποντο.
>
> I myself saw the walls after they had fallen, looking as if they had been captured by some other people rather than by the Romans. I had also seen them standing and had even heard them "talk." I should explain that there were seven towers extending from the Thracian Gates to the sea, and if a person approached any of these but the first, it was silent; but if he shouted anything at that one or threw a stone against it, it not only echoed and "spoke" itself, but also caused the second to do the same; and thus the sound continued from one to another through the whole seven, and they did not interrupt one another, but all in their proper turn, as each received the sound from the one before it, took up the echo and the voice and sent it on.

91 On portents and prodigies, see also Bertolazzi and Stewart in this volume.

92 Cass. Dio 75[74].10.3–5. See also Bertrand 2020, 125–127.

This passage allows Dio to assert authority as a reliable historian by stressing his own eyewitness testimony. Once again, he does not miss the opportunity to baffle his readers with the description of a strange phenomenon, i.e., the odd echo produced by Byzantium's "speaking walls", and in this way to give spice to his historical account.

Previous studies have stressed that Dio belonged to two different societies and that he actively employed his Hellenic cultural identity as a narrative perspective to present Rome's political history.[93] It has been argued that Dio's use of quotations from Greek literature is a case in point.[94] His resorting to the history and geography of Asia Minor in his work should be viewed in the same light. Dio's numerous comments, references, and digressions relating to Asia Minor are distinct historiographical features of his work. They require special attention since he skilfully employs them as a tool to offer more nuanced characterizations of his Roman emperors and as a strategy to display his expert knowledge. The fact that he diplomatically avoids broaching topics such as Greek civic politics or stories of Greek pride and identity is telling and corroborates the view that he wrote for Romans rather than Greeks in a provincial context.[95] His audience seems to have enjoyed his stories about wonders and curiosities from far-flung places in Asia Minor in particular. Remarkably, it is on these occasions in his work that Dio, the historian, becomes particularly tangible for his readers. His Herodotean eyewitness testimonies allow him to invoke special authority: He presents himself as a historian of exceptional credibility who is able to draw on first-hand knowledge and who does not hesitate to examine even bizarre and inexplicable phenomena in his untiring effort to offer reliable assessment.

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93 See Burden-Strevens 2015, 304–305.

94 *Ibid.*

95 On Dio's Roman readership, see Ameling 1997, 2491–2492. Ameling 1997, 2491, n. 109 explicitly rejects Aalders' view that Dio wrote for the "ordinary Greeks of the many cities of the empire" (Aalders 1986, 291). See, however, Rich 1990, 5 and Madsen 2009, 124, who believe that Dio possibly wrote for "Romanized" Greeks, who had made a career in the imperial service.

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CHAPTER 18

Dio, Severus, and the *Ludi Saeculares* of 204 CE

Jeremy Rossiter and Bethany Brothers

In a much-cited passage in Xiphilinus' epitome of Book 77 (77[76].1.1–5), Dio gives an account of the celebrations held in Rome to mark some of the key events of the first part of Severus' reign. In our brief surviving version, these events include Severus' military victories (νίκαι) (we are not told which ones), his return to Rome (ἀνακομιδή) (we are not told from where), and the tenth anniversary of his accession (δεκετηρίδι). In the same passage, Dio also mentions celebrations held to mark the marriage of Severus' elder son Caracalla to Plautianus' daughter, Plautilla. The one date which seems to fit all these events is 202 CE which was not only the year of Severus' *decennalia* but also the year in which he returned to Rome victorious (at least from his point of view) from his eastern campaigns. It was also the year in which Caracalla married Plautilla. Dio says that all these events were celebrated with spectacles (θέαι). What he then says about these spectacles has led to considerable debate, not least because his description of the great animal show (*venatio*) which formed the highlight of the celebrations is uncannily similar (though not identical) to that found on the Severan inscription which records the events of the *Ludi Saeculares* held in Rome two years later. Different explanations have been suggested for the state of Dio's text, with some scholars seeing it as a conflation, either accidental or deliberate, of the events of both years into a single narrative,[1] others as a product of later editorial mishandling.[2]

Despite the scholarly interest shown in this passage, one thing which has never been commented on is the peculiarly selective nature of Dio's narrative in the form in which it survives. While Dio characterizes the celebrations held in Rome as "multifaceted spectacles" (θέαι παντοδαπά), that is certainly not what he describes. The only features actually mentioned are the number and variety of the animals displayed and slaughtered in the *venatio*, and the peculiar design of the holding cage, "shaped like a boat" (ἐς πλοίου σχῆμα), from which they were released into the arena (Fig. 18.1).[3] Much the same is true of

1 Rowan 2012, 50–54, and Scott 2017, 154–161.

2 Carlson 1969, 20–21; Berlan-Bajard 2006, 77: "on peut envisager une confusion de son abréviateur."

3 On the Severan coinage relating to this event, see Bingham & Simonsen 2006, 51–60; Rowan 2012, 51–52, Fig. 10. The image included here is reproduced by kind permission of Roma Numismatics Ltd., London (www.RomaNumismatics.com) and resized for printing.

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FIGURE 18.1 Gold *aureus* of Septimius Severus (*Laetitia Temporum*) issued around the time of the *Ludi Saeculares*
ROMA NUMISMATICS

the celebrations held to mark the marriage of Caracalla and Plautilla. Again, all we hear about are the animals, in this case including sixty wild boars that were killed to mark the occasion.

If we compare Dio's account of the celebrations of Severus' *decennalia* to the text of the inscription detailing the events of the *Ludi Saeculares*, it quickly becomes apparent that the *venatio* was only one feature of a much more extensive program of events.[4] The *Ludi Saeculares* started with three days and nights of religious rituals and theatrical performances, then continued with seven more days of what the inscription refers to as *Ludi Honorarii* or "Magistrates' Games". These involved three days of theatrical performances, taking place in three different venues, followed by a series of equestrian events (chariot races and acrobatic riders), and, to finish, a magnificent display and hunt of wild animals.[5] What Dio describes, therefore, would appear to be simply the grand finale of a much longer festival, the other parts of which he, or his epitomizer, deliberately chose to omit.

Recent studies of the compositional method of Dio's epitomizer, Xiphilinus, have emphasized the "plagiaristic" and uncritical nature of his copying of Dio's text.[6] While on the one hand he readily omits large parts of Dio's original text – Brunt estimates up to 75% – he tends to reproduce faithfully those passages

4 For the text as originally discovered: *CIL* VI. 32326–32335. For the fragments found in 1930: Romanelli 1931, 313–345. For the full text: *AE* 1932 (1933) no. 70; Pighi 1965, 137–175; Rantala 2017, appendix 1–2, 172–190 (with an English translation).

5 On the Severan *Ludi Saeculares*, especially its religious ceremonies, see Lusnia 2014, 105–116.

6 E.g., Mallan 2013, Berbessou-Broustet 2016.

and episodes which he selects for inclusion.[7] There is little evidence to suggest that he systematically edited out details of those episodes which he judged worthy of inclusion on the grounds that they served his goal as a moralizing historian. As Berbessou-Broustet puts it, what he omits is what he regards as *inutile*, i.e., material that lay outside the scope of his main theme of matching action and behaviour to character, and particularly to bad character. This of course closely echoes Dio's own purposes in composing his *Roman History*.[8] In the case of imperial spectacles, what interested both writers was not so much the program of traditional ceremonies and contests which made up the games but rather the behaviour of the emperor in the arena as events unfolded. For it was this that exposed the moral strengths and weaknesses of the ruler and, by implication, his fitness, or otherwise, to rule.

The *Ludi Saeculares* of 204 CE provide a rare example of a major Roman spectacle for which we have preserved not only Dio's written account, as it appears in Xiphilinus' epitome, but also a substantial contemporary inscription recording the same event.[9] The inscription was originally found in 1890–1891, with further fragments added in 1930. The text was published in full by Pighi in 1965 and again more recently, with the addition of an English commentary and translation, by Jussi Rantala in 2017. Rantala's translation is not without its flaws and frustratingly omits several critical passages. Nevertheless, it is a welcome addition to the secondary scholarship on what has until recently been a somewhat neglected text.[10]

The inscription provides the best and most detailed account of a major festival held in Rome during the Severan Age. Its detailing of the events and venues used to house them allows us to reconstruct a fairly accurate picture of the festival program. It began with three days of religious rituals interspersed with stage shows (the *Ludi Latini*) and culminated with a performance of the spectacular Trojan Games (*Lusus Troiae*) and a recitation of the specially composed *Carmen Saeculare*. On the second day, the emperor announced the content of the *Ludi Honorarii*.

All this was to some degree predictable. The *Ludi Saeculares* had a long history and a prescribed program of events. The *Ludi Saeculares* held after the time of Augustus tended to follow the Augustan model. The Severan games were no exception. Features like the *Lusus Troiae* and the *Ludi Honorarii* were

7 Brunt 1980.

8 Berbessou-Broustet 2016, 84.

9 The same cannot be said of the Augustan *Ludi Saeculares* about which Dio (54.18.2) says very little and the surviving inscription is far more fragmentary.

10 Despite containing critical details of the procedures used for races in the circus, the text of the inscription is missing from Alison Futrell's otherwise excellent *The Roman Games. Historical Sources in Translation* (2006).

based not simply on ancient tradition but, more importantly, on Augustan precedent. Indeed, it is clear that Septimius Severus, in organizing the *Ludi Saeculares*, was keen to emulate the Augustan example. Such adherence to tradition would give much-needed legitimacy to his parvenu regime.[11]

But there were also innovations in the Severan games and ways in which they differed from the Augustan model. Some of the changes were inevitable, given the passage of time between the Augustan Age and the early 3rd century. Rome as a city had developed beyond recognition since the time of Augustus. As a result, the venues available for staging the games were both more numerous and more elaborate.[12] Severus' *Ludi Honorarii*, like those of Augustus, made use of a range of available structures. Both included the use of a temporary wooden theatre (*theatrum ligneum*) in the Campus Martius; both made use of Rome's first great stone theatre, the Theatre of Pompey. But the Severan games also had Domitian's Odeum to use. According to the inscription, this housed the "Greek Games" (*Ludi Graeci*), which in the Augustan *Ludi Honorarii* had been held in the Theatre of Pompey.

Exactly where the *venatio* took place is not certain. In Dio's version of events, the animals were released from their colossal "boat-like" cage "in the theatre" (ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ ἐς πλοίου σχῆμα). Most commentators, following Cary's Loeb edition, have translated this as "in the amphitheatre" without further specification.[13] One might naturally think of the Flavian amphitheatre as the likely setting for such a grand spectacle, but the evidence suggests otherwise. Severus was keen to follow the Augustan precedent for every detail of the *Ludi Saeculares*, and this meant locating most of the events, including the *venatio*, in the Campus Martius.[14] The "safety warning" which accompanies the declaration of the animal show at lines 41–43 of the inscription would hardly have been necessary in the context of the Flavian amphitheatre, but in a temporary "arena" setting in the Campus Martius it would make good sense:

> *post*[*quam circenses erunt perfecti,*] [*venati*]*onem parabimus fer*[*a*]*rum septingentarum. Cupiente*[*s*] *machinarum eventum provi*[*dere, q*]*uamquam*

11 On Augustan echoes in Severus' *Ludi Saeculares*: Cooley, 2007, 385–397; Barnes, 2008, 251–267.

12 Cooley 2007, 392 ("the topography of the games also balanced innovation and continuity").

13 Bingham & Simonsen 2006, 52; Rowan 2012, 51; Scott 2017, 155.

14 The part of the Augustan inscription where the location of the *venatio* is identified is missing (*CIL* VI. 32323, 158–161; Pighi 1965, 118–119). However, it is clear from other parts of the text that nearly all the events of the Augustan *Ludi Honorarii* took place in the Campus Martius, or more precisely in the so-called Circus Flaminius, a part of the Campus Martius designated for equestrian training and occasional festival events. On the history and location of the Circus Flaminius, see Humphrey 1986, 540–545; Coleman 2000, 217–218.

> *securit*[*a*]*ti vestrae p*[*rovi*]*derimus* [*alac*]*ri manu ubique, vos* [*hortamur ut custodes atten*][*te se*]*ctemini. Munificen*[*tia*] *nostra leones lea*[*e*] *leopardi ursi bisones onagri str*[*uthiones*] *centeni erunt.*
>
> After the circus races are finished, we will prepare an animal show consisting of seven hundred wild animals. Since we wish to ensure the success (*eventus*) of the contraptions (*machinae*), although we will look out with great care and in all directions for your safety, we nevertheless urge you to pay full attention to the guards. Thanks to our munificence there will be lions, lionesses, leopards, bears, bison, deer, ostriches, one hundred of each.[15]

The body responsible for the organization of the Severan *Ludi Saeculares* was, as in earlier times, the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* (Council of Fifteen). In 204 CE its composition, however, was very different from earlier times. Most of its members were provincials, either Africans or easterners.[16] The man in charge of the *Ludi Graeci* in the Odeum was Pompeius Rusonianus, an African friend of Severus' whose *cognomen* appears on an inscription at Lepcis Magna as the restorer of the city's largest bath and gymnasium complex.[17] Others, like Quintus Aiacius Modestus, later governor of Arabia, and Sextus Cocceius Vibianus also had links to North Africa.[18]

How significant the African or eastern identity of the Council members was in shaping the format of the games in Rome is open to question. The apparent introduction of the tutelary gods (*Di Patrii*) of Lepcis Magna into the text of the Severan *Carmen Saeculare* certainly suggests that the North African origins of the dynasty were not to be forgotten. One could also argue that the extraordinary boat-like contraption used as an animal cage in the *venatio* had an African connection. It was, after all, from Africa that most of the wild animals destined for Rome's arenas were shipped.[19]

As Rantala has argued, however, Birley's characterization of Septimius Severus as an "African" emperor is misleading. The city in which Severus, and perhaps other members of the *quindecimviri*, grew up may have been geographically located in Africa, but it was hardly, culturally speaking, an "African" city. Of course, the roots of its culture lay in the pre-Roman world of Punic

15 Authors' translation based on Pighi's text (5.41–43).

16 On the composition of Severus' *quindecimviri* committee, see Rantala 2017, 46, who suggests that at the time of the *Ludi Saeculares* the group "was manned by men trusted by Severus".

17 Reynolds & Ward-Perkins 1952, no. 396.

18 Birley 1988, 159–160, 253, no. 8; Rantala 2017, 46, 58 no. 28.

19 For the African trade in wild animals, see MacKinnon 2006, 137–162; Rossiter 2016, 241.

Africa, but by the mid-2nd century CE, when Severus was born, the culture of the city was heavily Hellenized. Nowhere was its Greco-Roman culture more visually displayed than in the town's public amenities: its baths, fountains, theatres, and arenas.[20] Its public monuments included an elegant stone theatre built in the Augustan era[21]; an amphitheatre and hippodrome built in the 1st century CE[22]; an imperial-style bath-house and gymnasium built in the following century.[23] Moreover, the peak of this infrastructure development can be tied to the very years in which Severus himself was growing up in Lepcis. In his adolescence, he could immerse himself in the culture of the Greek gymnasium, making use of one of the largest and most elaborate *palaestrae* built anywhere in the Roman world (Fig. 18.2). According to epigraphic evidence, this *palaestra* was completed in the late Hadrianic period, not long before Severus' birth.[24] But this was not all. Also built when Severus was a young man were important new additions to the Lepcis hippodrome. An inscription dated to the Antonine period (161/162 CE) tells us that new starting gates (*carceres*) were added to the hippodrome at this time (Fig. 18.3).[25]

These were both quintessentially Greek buildings devoted to Greek cultural practices. If the African or eastern members of Severus' Council of Fifteen, whose job it was to organize the *Ludi Saeculares* in Rome, brought with them any provincial tastes or influences they would, if anything, have reflected this highly Hellenized culture of the African and eastern provinces. In reality, the influx of Greek practices and ideas into the festival culture of Rome had begun much earlier.[26] From the time Domitian re-established the Capitoline Games, inaugurated in a new state-of-the-art athletic stadium in the heart of the city, the world of the Greek gymnasium became increasingly embedded in the culture of the capital. The great imperial bath complexes (*thermae*), so often thought of by modern scholars simply as "baths", were, in reality, an essential part of this Hellenization of Roman leisure practices. Nowhere is this clearer than in a comment made by Galen, himself an easterner from Pergamum, who gives us a rare glimpse of fitness training in Antonine Rome.[27] The mention he makes of his daily workouts at the baths might pass without comment (and indeed usually has) were it not

20 Recent studies on the Roman city of Lepcis Magna include: Kenrick 2009, 86–140; Wilson, 2007, 290–326.

21 Caputo 1987; Kenrick 2009, 120–122.

22 Amphitheatre: Ricciardi 2009, 130–132. Hippodrome: Humphrey, Sear & Vickers 1972–3, 25–97; Humphrey 1986, 25–55; Kenrick 2009, 132–134.

23 Baths: Yegül 1992, 186–192; Van Buren and Fraser 1932, 130–133; Kenrick 2009, 96–98.

24 *IRT* 361, now re-dated to 137 CE; Kenrick 2009, 96.

25 Di Vita-Evrard, 1965, 33–37.

26 For the revival of Greek festival culture in Rome, see König 2007, 135–145.

27 On Galen's activities in Rome, see Mattern 2013, 99–138.

FIGURE 18.2 The Hadrianic *palaestra* and baths at Lepcis Magna, with the Severan *nymphaeum* in the distance
J. ROSSITER

FIGURE 18.3 The hippodrome at Lepcis Magna with the Antonine starting gates (*carceres*) in the foreground
J. ROSSITER

for his distinctly un-Roman terms of reference. In a city boasting the world's biggest and best bathing establishments, including – and this was certainly Galen's destination – the relatively new Baths of Trajan, it is significant that Galen refers to these baths not as the "Baths of Trajan" (*Thermae Traiani*) but rather as the "Gymnasium of Trajan" (γυμνασίον Τραιανοῦ) clearly betraying his Greek cultural sensibilities, in line with which the baths were seen as a Roman add-on to the Greek gymnasium rather than the other way round.[28] At the turn of the century, the same imperial bath and gymnasium complex was home to the headquarters of the Universal Athletic Guild, presided over by the easterner Marcus Aurelius Asclepiades, a former *periodos* champion.[29]

It was within this revived Hellenic festival environment that Severus proclaimed the re-enactment of the *Ludi Saeculares*. Dio's account, as we have seen, focuses solely on the extraordinary display of animals in the great *venatio* which formed the grand finale of the festival. But this is not at all the case in the inscription, which preserves a record of a much longer and more varied series of entertainments. The details of these have rarely been discussed, so it is worth reviewing what exactly the inscription tells us about the Severan *ludi*.

There are two places in the inscription where the entertainment events (as opposed to the religious events) of the games are listed. The first (5.36–46) is at the point in the text, during Day 2 of the religious celebrations, where the *Ludi Honorarii* are first announced. Here the events of the *Ludi Honorarii* are listed in the future tense as a sort of "declaration of intent" on the part of the emperor and the organizing committee of the games. Seven races are listed, and for each is given the type of competition (*quadrigae*, *bigae*, or *desultores*) and the amounts of the cash prizes.[30] There then follows the passage, cited above (p.485), which announces the staging of an elaborate animal show (*venatio*),

28 Mattern 2013, 127.

29 König 2005, 1.

30 Authors' translation followed by Pighi's text (5.36–41): After the religious celebrations are finished on June 3rd, we will also add the Magistrates' Games lasting seven days. On June 4th … in three theatres, the wooden theatre, the Theatre of Pompey, and the Odeum … the shows which we will give … on June 7th we will present a show of the same circus races in the Circus Maximus. The order of the races will be as follows:

In the 1st race, we will present four-horse teams, one from each of the four factions. The winner will receive … sesterces, second place … sesterces, third-place 4,000 sesterces. In the 2nd race, also of four-horse teams, the same prizes will be given.

In the 3rd race the winner of the two-horse teams will receive … sesterces, second place … sesterces, third place … sesterces.

In the 4th race we will send out horse jumpers and jockeys [?]. The winner will receive 6,000 sesterces, second place 2,000 sesterces, third place 1,000 sesterces. In the 5th race in the afternoon we will send out two-horse teams … 10,000 sesterces … having kept our promise of the third race. In the 6th race we will send out horse jumpers again. The winner will receive 6,000 sesterces, second place 2,000 sesterces, third place 1,000 sesterces. In the 7th

together with a safety warning to the spectators to heed the instructions of the arena guards. Lastly, a "programme" of the proposed theatre shows is given, including titles of the various pantomimes.[31]

The *Ludi Honorarii* lasted for a week. In the first three days, entertainment was provided in the form of stage plays (*pantomimi*) which rotated between three theatres. On the fourth day, the entertainment moved to the Circus Maximus, where chariot races were held throughout the day. The number of races, seven, was again doubtless chosen to echo the ruling emperor's *nomen*. For the final event, the *venatio*, the entertainment moved back to the Campus Martius, very likely to the "temporary circus" (*circus temporalis*), a make-shift wooden arena constructed there especially for the Games.

It is this temporary circus that is the focus of the other passage in the inscription (5.76–83) which gives further details of the entertainments associated with the *Ludi Saeculares*. The text here is very fragmentary but clearly refers

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(race) we will present four-horse teams. The first, second and third places will each receive an equal prize of … sesterces in addition to what we offered to give in the first race.

[*Per*]*actis ludis* [*sollemnibus III non. iun., ludos honor*]*arios quoque per* [*VII dies adiciemus. Prid. non.*] [*easde*]*m, item nonarum die et VIII id. easdem, theatris tribus, ligneo, Pompeiano, Odi*[*o spect*]*acula quae sumus e*[*dituri….*]*is fr*[*….*]*….*[*dein die*] *VII iduum earundem circensium spectacula in Circo Maximo dabimus….*[*…. Ordo missu*]*um. Missu primo quad*[*rigas singulas e factionibus quattuor*] *ex*[*hibebimus:…. qui vicerit accipiet HS XXIV n., secundo*]*….* [*HS VIII n., tert*]*io HS IIII n. Secu*[*n*]*do quoque missu quadrigarum eadem praemia dabuntur. M*[*issu tertio q*]*ui bigam vicerit* [*a*]*ccipiet HS…. n., secundo HS…. n., tertio HS…. n.. Quarto missu desultores cursoresque mittemus: ac*]-[*cipiet*] *qui vicerit HS VI n., secund. HS II n., tertio HS ∞ n. Post meridie quinto missu bigas m*[*ittemus….*]*ad HS X n. serva*[*t*]*a pollicit*[*atione missus tertii. Se*]*x*[*to mi*]*ssu desul*[*tores mittemus:…. accipiet qui vi*]-[*cerit HS*] *VI n., secundo HS II n., tertio HS*[*∞*]*n. Septimo quadr*[*ig*]*as exhibebimus perceptur*[*is primo pa*]*ri ac secundo tertioque H*[*S…. n.,…. ad. is quae*] *daturo*[*s nos m. I polli*] *citi sumus.*

31 Authors' translation followed by Pighi's text (5.43–46): "The order of events of the Magistrates' Games will be as follows: June 4th, first day: in the wooden theatre, a new production of the pantomime *Pylades*; in the Odeum, a new production of the pantomime *Apolaustus*; in the Theatre of Pompey, a new production of the pantomime *Marcus*. June 5th, second day: in the wooden theatre, the pantomime *Marcus*; on the second day, in the Odeum, the pantomime *Pylades*; in the Theatre of Pompey, the pantomime *Apolaustus*. June 6th, third day: in the wooden theatre, the pantomime *Apolaustus*; on the third day, in the *Odeum*, the pantomime *Marcus*; on the third day, in the Theatre of Pompey, the pantomime *Pylades*." [*Ordo*] *ludorum honor*[*ariorum. Prid. non. iun. die primo*] [*in th*]*eatro ligneo commis*[*s*]*io nova in qua pan*[*t*]*om*[*imus P*]*ylades, item die primo in Odi*[*o commiss*]*io nova in qua pantomimus Apolaustus, item* [*die primo i*]*n theatro Pompei co*[*mmissio nova in qua pantomi*]-[*mus Ma*]*rcus. Nonis iun. die secundo in t*[*hea*]*tro ligneo pantomimus Marcus, item* [*die secun*]*do in Odio pantomimus Pylades, item in the*[*atro Pomp*]*ei pantomimus Apol*[*austus. VIII id. iun. die tertio*] [*in the*]*atro ligneo pantomimus Apolaustus, item die tertio in Odio pantomimus Marcus, it*[*em die te*]*rtio in theatro Pompei pantomimus* [*Pyla*]*des.*

to chariot racing. These are not, however, the same races as the ones already mentioned in the proclamation of the *Ludi Honorarii*. To judge from the placement of these lines in the overall text, these races took place during the closing day of the religious celebrations (*Ludi Sollemnes*), i.e., June 3rd, the same day as the "Trojan Games" (*Lusus Troiae*). The latter, which involved competing teams of elite youths staging a mock battle on horseback, were obviously a highlight of the *Ludi Saeculares*.[32] Following an account of the prize-giving ceremony at the end of the *Lusus Troiae*, the inscription continues with several fragmentary lines referring to a series of races that took place "in the temporary circus" (*in circo temporali*). These, too, were a highlight of the last day of the *Ludi Saeculares*. The fragmentary lines of the inscription are difficult to make perfect sense of, but the preserved part of the text reads more or less as follows:

> [*I*]*nde Severus et Antoni*[*nus Augg.* [[*et Geta*]] [[*Caes.*]] *cum*] *pr. p*[*r. e*]*t c*[*eteris process*]*erun*[*t*] *ad ludos saeculares consummando*[*s*] *in thea*[*tro lign*]*eo. Pompa* [*omnis.... sac*]*rificalis intri*[*nsecus.... in cir*]*co temporal*[*i*] *circu*[*mdu*]*cta est, ludis saecularibus* [*consumman*]-[*dis impp. Severus.... et Anton*]*in*[*us togis palmatis sumptis et scipionibus* {*a*}*ebornii*[*s*] *ad circum* [*temp*]*oralem* [*venerunt.... supra c*]*arceres se***c*[....]*consedit imp. Antoninus Aug.*....*]*dit m*[....]*Severus Aug. missu primo quadrigas singul*[*a*]*s e faction*[*bus m*]*is*[*it, item II, missu III bigas;.... desultores missu III*]*I cursor*[*e*]*sque* [*e*]*x metis Murciis misit Vlpius So*[*ter cos. des.*] [....] *reno*[*vatisqu*]*e similibus antique moris spectaculis concurrentib*[*us.... coeunti*]*busque.... e su*[....]ulenta pe**[]*um Severus et Antoninus Augg.* [....]*um co*[....]*oreis et soleis fetasiis. Tum Severu*[*s....*]*m se*[....]*dit ant*[*e.... supra car*]*ceres sedit et postmerid*[*ia*]*nos missus misit. Missu V misit bigas si*[*ngulas, missu*] *VI misit desultores.... et miss*[*u VII qu*]*adrigas, praemia autem consecutis* [....]*pin*[*.... in sec*]*undo act*[*u.... dede*]*rant ex is frugibus quas* [*popul*]*us Romanus contulerat,* [*id*] *est quadrigae e*[*t bigae; desul*] [*toribus ex isd*]*em* [*fru*]*gibus d*[*edera*]*nt; reliquiae frugum apparationi*[*bus in*] *secun*[*do actu datae errant pe*]*rpetua*[....]

> Then the Augusti Severus and Caracalla and the Caesar Geta with the praetorian prefect and others proceeded to bring the Secular Games to an end in the wooden theatre. The entire sacrificial procession was led around inside the temporary circus. For the final event of the Secular Games, the emperors Severus and Caracalla, wearing palmate togas and carrying ivory sceptres, came to the temporary circus… . Caracalla took his seat

32 Rantala 2017, 154–157.

> above the starting gates … for the first race Severus sent out *quadrigae*, one each from each of the factions; for the second race the same; for the third race *bigae*; for the fourth race Ulpius Soter, the consul designate, sent off horse jumpers and jockeys[?] from the Murcian turning posts … and the renovated … [?] … shows according to ancient custom … competing and moving together … Severus and Caracalla … with reins[?] and racing [?] sandals.[33] Then Severus … in front of … took his seat above the starting gates and sent off the afternoon teams. In the fifth race he sent off individual *bigae*; for the sixth race, horse jumpers; and for the seventh race, *quadrigae*. The prizes … having been won … in the second performance [?] … they had given from the profits which the Roman people had contributed, that is the *quadrigae* and *bigae*. [The prizes] for the horse jumpers they had given from the same profits. The rest [of the profits?] … in the second performance[?] were given … to the [circus] officials….[34]

Clearly, this passage is referring to different races from the ones listed in the earlier passage. In the first passage, the location of the races is specified as the Circus Maximus; in the second, it is given as the "temporary circus". In this respect, Severus was again following Augustan tradition (as the inscription indicates). The Augustan *Ludi Saeculares* inscription also records a temporary circus constructed in the Campus Martius to accommodate the races associated with the festival.[35] The Murcian *metae* (turning posts) referred to in the Severan text must have been portable (wooden?) copies of the iconic *metae* of the Circus Maximus.[36] The starting of the races from a seat of honour above the *carceres* was again a time-honoured tradition. The same scenario is alluded to in the text of the *Acta Arvalia* (219 CE) which describes chariot races held in the Arval Circus outside Rome[37]:

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33 The Latin words (Pighi 1965, 168, l. 81) are [*l*]*oreis et soleis fetasiis* (or *fetesiis*), which should mean "reins and [racing?] shoes/slippers". Rantala (2017, 179) gives a different reading: *co*[*l*]*ores et solens fearsiis*. It is unclear where this alternate reading originates.

34 Authors' translation following Pighi's text (5.76–83).

35 Pighi 1965, 118. Although the Augustan inscription does not use the words *circus temporalis*, a temporary circus is implied by a reference to the setting up of turning posts (line 154): *metae positae quadrigae missae et desultores misit Potitus Messalla*. There is evidence for similar "portable" turning posts in an inscription from Auzia in Mauretania: Pichot 2012, 91, citing *CIL* VIII 9065: *perfectis metis et ovaris itemque tribunal iudicum*. See also Coleman 2000, 217.

36 They are called "Murcian" after the shrine to the goddess Murcia which was located near them. For details, see Humphrey 1972, 60–63.

37 *Acta Arvalia* (219 CE) 9–12; Humphrey 1972, 154; Henzen 1874 36–39.

> *deinde mag(ister) (promagister) ille latum sumsit et [r]icinium; superaccep[it] coron(am) pactilem roseam et super carcares adscendit et sign(um) quadrig(is) big(is) desult(oribus) [mi]sit, praesid(entibus) illo et illo ad cretam.*
>
> Then the president of the games (or acting president) wearing a broad-striped (toga) and veil received on his head a wreath of plaited roses and climbed on top of the starting gates and gave the signal to the *quadrigae*, the *bigae*, and the horse jumpers. The other two (officials) presided at the chalk (line).[38]

This procedure for starting the races is also seen in several artistic representations of the Roman circus, most clearly in the circus mosaic from Lyon in France (Fig. 18.4) which shows the presiding *magister ludi* sitting on top of the starting gates while a circus hand pulls the lever to open the gates below.[39]

FIGURE 18.4 Circus mosaic from Lyon showing the starting gates and presiding officials
URSUS, CC-BY-SA-3.0, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS
Note: Image resized for printing.

38 Authors' translation based on Henzen (218–219).
39 Humphrey 1972, 216–218; Dunbabin 2016, 150–151.

The inscription detailing the *Ludi Saeculares* of 204 CE provides an unparalleled account of the various forms of entertainment provided to the people of Rome in association with the more solemn religious ceremonies, which together extended over many days. Of the three forms of entertainment included, the *ludi scaenici*, the *venatio*, and the *ludi circenses*, the inscription gives most emphasis to the equestrian events, highlighting the attendance of the emperor and his sons in both racing arenas and giving details of each type of race and of the prize money distributed to each winner for each event. The theatrical performances are referenced in somewhat less detail; we are given the title of each "play" and the identity of the theatre where it is to be performed, but not much else. Much the same is the case with the animal show, despite its being billed as the grand finale of the *Ludi Honorarii*. The inscription reveals the number and type of animals to be exhibited and adds a safety warning, but there is a lot we are not told; there is no mention of the emperor's role at the *venatio* and no mention of the performers.

The inscription's emphasis on the *ludi circenses* is not, we think, accidental. For Severus and the other eastern and North African members of the organizing committee of the *Ludi Saeculares*, the highlights of the festival would have been the events most closely associated with the Greek festival culture with which they were familiar, i.e., the events in the theatre and the hippodrome. The animal hunt, a distinctly Roman feature of the games, was undoubtedly needed to maintain the Roman traditions of the festival – it had been a part of the Secular Games at least since Augustan times[40] – but it was not an event that belonged to the world of Greek festival competition.

In Dio's account of the games, we find a complete reversal of emphasis. Here it is the animal show which receives almost exclusive attention, with virtually no mention being made of the other forms of entertainment. The equestrian events which are highlighted in the inscription are not so much as hinted at by Dio. Why is this? Is it simply the result of the epitomizing process? Are we to believe that Dio's original text contained a fuller description of the Games, one which included more information about more events? This cannot be ruled out, but given Dio's general lack of interest in public spectacles, it seems unlikely. Dio's treatment of Trajan's great victory games in 103 CE (Dio 68.10.2) offers a useful parallel. Here again, he focuses his narrative almost exclusively on the most Roman feature of the games, the gladiatorial contests.[41]

40 *CIL* VI. 32323, l. 163: *Pr. eid. Iun. venationem da*[*bimus in … et ludos circenses committemus*]. Pighi 1965, 118.

41 Dio does also briefly mention "the dancers of pantomimes", alluding to Trajan's alleged erotic interest in one of the dancers.

In his narrative of the Severan dynasty, Dio rarely mentions spectacles.[42] When he does, it is usually for one of two reasons: either to demonstrate flaws in the character of his imperial subjects or to provide a context for omens that warn of impending disasters.[43] The first of these approaches is well illustrated in Dio's account of the reign of Caracalla. When wintering away from Rome, Caracalla ordered the construction of temporary race-tracks and amphitheatres (sometimes never used) to support his passion for chariot racing and hunting (78[77].9.7). For Dio, this is just an example of the emperor's profligate spending. Elsewhere he uses events in the amphitheatre to illustrate Caracalla's innate cruelty. The emperor's willingness to sanction the slaughter of rare and exotic animals and of "as many gladiators as possible" at the games in Nicomedia (78[77].6.2) serves to underscore his basic uncouthness and lack of humanity.

Dio uses this same rubric in his account of Elagabalus; he only introduces the theme of public festivals and games into his narrative in ways that bring disrepute to the emperor. We are told, for example, that Elagabalus' marriage to Cornelia Paula in 219 CE was celebrated with a show of gladiators and an animal hunt (*venatio*) (80[79].9.2). This in itself was highly unusual: Gladiatorial *munera* were normally held to honour the dead, not the living, and they were associated with funerals, not weddings. Furthermore, Dio tells us, at the animal show Elagabalus took pleasure in witnessing the killing of fifty-one tigers. This last point is almost certainly a fabrication since nearly all other evidence

42 Dio's references to spectacles during the Severan Age include the following: Septimius Severus provided amphitheatre games (74[73].16.5; 75[74].2.5–6; 75[74].4–5; 76[75]1.1–5; 77[76].7.5; 77[76].10.3), circus games (76[75].4.2–7; 77[76].7.2–3), and athletic games (76[75].16.1); Caracalla provided amphitheatre games (78[77].6.2; 78[77].10.1–3; 78[77].17.4; 78[77].19.3–4) and circus games (78[77].1.2; 78[77].10.1–3; 78[77].17.4; 79[78].8.1–3); Elagabalus provided amphitheatre games (80[79].9.1–2), circus games (80[79].14.2; 80[79].15.1–2), and athletic games (80[79].10.2–3). Not all of these refer to public spectacles; some relate to private contexts in which the emperors indulged their passion for arena sports. Rarely does Dio devote more than a line or two to these events, sometimes giving few details beyond the occasion and the type of spectacle (e.g., 80[79].9.2: "On the occasion of [Elagabalus'] wedding … there were gladiatorial fights at which the emperor wore a purple-fringed toga, as he had done at the votive[?] games; in addition many different wild animals were killed including an elephant and fifty-one tigers" [ἐν δ' οὖν τοῖς γάμοις … μονομάχων τε ἀγῶνες ἐγένοντο, ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ περιπόρφυρον ἐνδύντος, ὃ καὶ ἐν ταῖς εὐχωλιμαίαις θέαις ἐπεποιήκει. καὶ θηρία ἄλλα τε πολλὰ καὶ ἐλέφας τίγριδές τε μία καὶ πεντήκοντα ἐσφάγησαν]).

43 Cf. Newbold 1975, 589–604. Newbold identifies "conduct of giver or president of games" as the most common feature of all Dio's games narratives. On Dio's use of the games as a forum for character assessment, see Groot 2008, 264–289. Groot's discussion does not include the Severan emperors.

from the Roman world suggests that tigers were used in the Roman arena for display, not for slaughter.[44] They were notoriously difficult (and expensive) to obtain and highly prized for their display value. Dio's purpose here is to suggest a reversal of normal behaviour. Elagabalus was sufficiently perverse, or ignorant, to stage a *munus* at a wedding and to condone the killing of highly rare and valuable animals. On both counts, he was acting irrationally and contrary to societal norms.

Elagabalus' passion for chariot racing also becomes a weapon in Dio's hands. Again, it is used primarily as a means to ridicule and defame the emperor. In Dio's world view, "good" emperors like Septimius Severus may have embraced the world of the circus, but they did so with dignity and with full respect for the traditions and ceremonial protocols of the games. In contrast, "bad" emperors like Elagabalus, with his yearning for stardom as a charioteer of the Green faction (80[79].14.2) and his readiness to while away his time practicing his charioteering skills on his private race-track outside Rome, changed the emperor's role from one of a dutiful observer to one of a rowdy participant, thereby bringing disrepute to the imperial office.[45]

Keeping Elagabalus' company at the top of the list of emperors denounced by Dio for their profligate behaviour in the arena is Commodus. Here was another emperor who devoted himself more to recreation and public spectacle than to the serious business of the empire. Dio gives a long and colourful account of Commodus' antics in the arena. He mocks the emperor for his shameless buffoonery, parading himself as Mercury in the amphitheatre, dressed in the robes of an eastern monarch or as a *faux* gladiator. His role-playing of Hercules and the Stymphalian birds is beyond embarrassing.[46] He is cowardly, too, reluctant to draw human blood in public, but without any such inhibitions in the privacy of his own residence. But the fear of death is never far away. The lethal environment of the amphitheatre is used to good effect by Dio to highlight Commodus' cruel and destructive character. It is here that he took pleasure in killing dozens of wild animals (the more dangerous ones already trapped by nets); here that he ordered the summary execution of those he suspected of treason and (with the help of a headless ostrich) threatened

44 E.g., *HA Ant. Pius* 10.8–9: *edita munera in quibus elephantos et corocottas et tigrides et rhinocerotes, crocodillos etiam atque hippopotamos et omnia ex toto orbe terrarum exhibuit* ("He held games at which he displayed elephants and the animals called corocottae and tigers and rhinoceroses, even crocodiles and hippopotami, in short, all the animals of the whole earth").

45 Scott 2018, 134.

46 Hekster 2002, 146–154, discusses this passage at length, suggesting that Commodus' cosplay appearance as Hercules was meant to evoke an impression of immortality.

the same punishment on any disloyal senator (73[72].19–21).[47] As with Dio's account of Elagabalus, many of the details of these arena shows are hardly credible or are at least highly exaggerated, but that is not the point; what matters to Dio is not the accuracy of his stories but rather their value as a means to throw light on the moral and mental deficiencies of the emperor, in the course of which the truth will often take second place to the message.

The second way in which public spectacles enter into Dio's narrative is when they provide the context for some dramatic or surreal event that serves as an omen for imminent disaster. A good example of this is his account of the strange events which occurred at the games honouring Septimius Severus in 217 CE, on the eve of Caracalla's murder (80[79].8.1–2). As the colourful procession of dignitaries, priests, charioteers, and attendants paraded around the Circus Maximus in the traditional *pompa circensis* at the start of the games, the statue of Mars which was being carried in the procession fell from its cart.[48] Later in the games, when the supporters of the Green faction, whose charioteers had been defeated, spotted a large black bird crowing from the top of the Augustan obelisk, they hailed it as the "Bird of Mars" (*Martialis*), which also happened to be the name of Caracalla's murderer. Dio relates these incidents not because of any serious interest in the games but simply for their value as omens of portending disaster. The same might be said about his account of the dramatic thunderstorm which set fire to the Flavian amphitheatre in Rome later in the same year (79[78].25.2–3). It is not the amphitheatre itself or the various spectacles it housed which interest Dio, but rather the coincidence of a catastrophic natural disaster with the violent death of the ruling emperor.

Dio's abbreviated and confused account of the games held by Septimius Severus to mark the turning of Rome's *saeculum* in 204 CE is not written with the same contempt and hostility which the author directs towards Severus' successors, and the tone of Dio's writing here is very different. It lacks the cynicism embedded in his narrative of the reigns of Caracalla and Elagabalus. In the truncated form in which it survives, it remains something of a historical footnote, without any obvious agenda. In line with Dio's broader approach to Greek and Roman cultural identity, the text plays down the Greek features of Severus' games and focuses on the one emphatically Roman feature, the *venatio*.[49] Without having Dio's original version of events, it is impossible to

47 Herodian (1.15.6) abandons all credibility in claiming that Commodus on one occasion personally killed one hundred lions in the arena.

48 For details of the traditional *pompa circensis*, see Latham 2016, 159–161. Statues of the gods were normally carried in the procession set on carts (*tensae*).

49 On Dio's attitude to Greek and Roman culture, see Aalders, 1986, 282–304. Aalders argues that Dio "felt himself completely Roman".

know if this is a matter of deliberate choice or subsequent selective editing. It can be argued, however, that the *venatio* was of particular interest to Dio because, unlike the other more traditional components of the *Ludi Saeculares*, it involved some unique and unusual features, not least the extraordinary boat-like contraption from which the animals were released. The animals themselves, collected from the outer reaches of the Roman world, served to display the global dominion of the new regime, particularly apposite for an empire ruled by an African emperor and a Syrian empress.[50] Dio's interest in the *Ludi Saeculares* of 204 CE does not extend beyond his own narrowly conceived agenda. The chance survival of the official record of these games, even in fragmentary form, reveals the incompleteness of Dio's account and the degree to which he was prepared to overlook components of major public events that were of little value to his historical aims.

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50 Östenberg 2009, 168–184.

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